UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THEORY TO PRACTICE: UNDERSTANDING TEACHING THROUGH DIALOGUE JOURNALS

by

PATRICIA ANN MILLS

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and
recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
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THEORY TO PRACTICE: UNDERSTANDING TEACHING THROUGH DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Submitted by PATRICIA ANN MILLS

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF EDUCATION

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Date: May 15, 1990

To my mother, Patricia Jordan, of Brighton, England, my first teacher. We have shared a written dialogue for many years.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the journey of learning for prospective teachers in Early Childhood Education. The study takes place during three consecutive academic terms at the end of the third year of professional preparation and during the fourth, and final, year. The first term of the study is in the practicum setting, and the subsequent two terms are in the university classroom.

It is widely believed that the use of dialogue journals in the classroom is a powerful method of uncovering the tacit knowledge which exists just below the level of awareness. My purpose in this study was to investigate the connections which were made between the practice of teaching and the learning of theory, through the use of dialogue journals.

During Phase 1 of the study, I acted as the faculty consultant for two student teachers who were practice teaching in early childhood classrooms. I read and responded to their dialogue journals during the practicum phase. In Phase 2 of the study I observed in the university classroom, at which time three more early childhood students joined the study. Again I read and responded to their dialogue journals, this time with all five student teachers.

I visited the practicum classrooms once per week during Phase 1, and I attended all early childhood classes for the duration of Phase 2 of the

study. I responded regularly to the journals, attempting to pose questions and comments which would elicit further thought and reflection. I communicated regularly with the informants during the practicum, in the university classes, by telephone, and through interviews.

The data used in my study were gathered from the students' dialogue journals, from field notes made during observations and interviews, and from audio tape recordings of the interviews. I also audio tape recorded my personal impressions after the observations and interviews.

The three data chapters address the discoveries of learning which are made by the student teachers in their dialogue journals, the significance of practicum in the continuum of teacher education, and the power of journal writing in the classroom.

The final chapter contains a summary of the study, implications for teacher educators and for the use of journals in the classroom, suggestions for further study, and a short concluding comment of personal reflections.

PREFACE

Having been involved with young children in one capacity or another for many years, I had the opportunity to act as cooperating teacher for students from an early childhood development program who were serving their practicum in my day care classroom. It was as I was working with these students of young children, and feeling very excited about it, that I began to realize how many of my experiences I could share with them, yet still have, in a small way, the contact with the children I loved. This began to point to a new direction in my life. Since then, I have been a faculty consultant for students from two community colleges and a university. I have read intensively and taken courses on the supervision of practicum; thus along with my other intense interest, that of journal writing, I have ultimately arrived at this study.

When I worked with early childhood students in their practicum classrooms, there was already an expectation for the use of journals, and I began, at that time, to see how valuable journal writing could be. I had done little reading on the subject, but I knew, in a manner that was more intuitive than scientific, that if the students could write about their practicum experiences, they would begin to think more deeply about what was happening for them in the classroom. When I began to write my own journals in university classes, this feeling was justified, and my two interests began to merge. I was making connections between the

importance of practicum and that of journal writing and so I began my present journey of learning.

I have been required to write journals in several of my university classes, both at graduate and undergraduate levels. From the beginning, I realized how important that this writing was becoming to me, as a learner, and so I hypothesized that these benefits could also be experienced by student teachers if they were given the encouragement to write. Throughout an early graduate research course, I shared a dialogue journal with the professor, and on recently re-reading the paper with which I culminated that course, I remembered how, through following my journals in that class, I had evolved a metaphor for learning as a journey. I had not realized how closely I would follow this metaphor until I reached the final words of that paper. Speaking of journals I wrote:

> This is powerful stuff! As I said in my final journal entry, I intend now to continue my journal writing. My immediate goal is to use my journalling to enable me to come to a decision about my thesis question. Ultimately, and through it all, I want to use my journal as:
>
> a safe place
> a place to share
> a place to research
> a place to discover
> a place to learn
>
> and a place to explore and grow. This will be my journey.

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To the student teachers in my study, who unfortunately may not be identified, I owe a sincere debt of gratitude. Without their willingness to share their thoughts, ideas, and writing, this study would not have taken place. They were so very busy, yet they were always there to share a word, an insight, a smile. That they were faithful to their journal writing was proof, to me, that they believed in our shared journey of exploration.

Thanks are also due to my friends (old and new), and my colleagues, who were always there with words of encouragement and optimism just when I most needed them. They are many. They know who they are, and I thank them most heartily.

I wish to extend special thanks to my children, Karen, Rachael, Stephen and Allison, who showed patience and understanding during the writing of this document. Perhaps now I can catch up and once again become a part of their lives.

Finally, to my husband, Bob, who has encouraged and supported me throughout this study, a hearfelt "thank you" for the hours spent so carefully proofreading my final drafts. His time and skill are very much appreciated.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

There is a growing body of research in the field of teacher preparation related to student teaching. The debate questions many of the basic issues of practicum, such as its timing, its length, and its placement in the continuum of teacher education. Even the value of the student teaching experience within the continuum of professional preparation is being questioned. Though there are conflicting opinions as to the lasting influence of the student teaching component, its profound significance is generally accepted. Joyce (1988) writes of experienced teachers who "indicate that the practice teaching experience is the critical influence" (p. 33), and MacKinnon (1989), in a discussion of the necessity for conformity in the practicum situation restates that practicum "is considered to be the *sine qua non* of teacher preparation" (p.2). Frieberg and Waxman (1988) began their paper on alternative feedback approaches by saying that, "Field experiences are an important part of the professional development of teachers" (p. 8). While other researchers (Erdman, 1983; Katz and Lay-Dopyera, 1989; MacKinnon, 1987; and Zahorik, 1988) agree with this opinion, there seems to be a discrepancy in how student teachers make connections between their theoretical classes and their field work or practicum (Bolin, 1988; Erdman, 1983; Fox, 1987; Joyce, 1988; MacKinnon,

1987). Sarason (in Fox, 1987) points out that "higher quality, liberally educated, more appreciated and better paid teachers are not being prepared for the realities of the classroom, the school, the school system" (p.33). Bolin speaks of student teachers' "latent philosophy of education" (p. 53), which they bring with them into their professional preparation. This suggests that the student teachers' conception of teaching may have been influenced more by previous experiences as a pupil in a classroom than by study of teaching. It was to make these connections that the informants were asked about their early experiences in school.

The way in which practical experiences are designed may have a positive or a negative effect on preservice teachers, and there are many considerations which influence how beneficial a teaching experience might be for the participant. Such things as the timing of each practicum in relation to the other courses, the placement of the student teacher, and the type of supervision that s/he receives from both the school and the university are crucial to a successful experience. If these factors are all designed to best meet the student teachers' learning needs, then they will gain maximum advantage from each practicum. Further, the research states that if student teachers are encouraged to think reflectively about their own teaching beliefs as they are related to their practical experiences then their personal process of learning and understanding in the field of education will be enhanced (Bolin, 1988; Carswell, 1988; Lund, 1988; Roderick, 1986; Shuy, 1987; Stover, 1989). As a result, they will pass on this process of understanding to their pupils in early childhood classrooms.

There are many ways in which reflective thinking may be stimulated, but research shows that the process of personal journal writing is one of the most powerful (Bolin, 1988; Carswell, 1988; Craig, 1983;

Roderick, 1986; Shuy, 1987; Stover, 1986; Yinger, 1985). Not only does the process enable writers to clarify their thoughts, but it also acts as a way of helping them to see and understand the world around them. The National Council of Teachers of English Commission on Composition 1984 stated:

> Writing is a powerful instrument of thought. In the act of composing, writers learn about themselves and their world and communicate their insights to others. Writing confers the power to grow personally, and to effect change in the world. (In Stover, 1986, p. 21)

Carswell (1988) writes that "the journal encourages writers to search for relationships between their studies, their practice, and their whole range of personal experience" (p.111).

From the information contained in the growing body of current literature, it seems that there is a link to be made between learning and understanding (both in the university classroom and in the field) and the writing of reflective dialogue journals. When student teachers reflect on their experiences in practicum by writing in dialogue journals, the process enables them to explore their thoughts and ideas and to make sense of their learning by the connections which they make between practice and theory.

Purpose of the Study

This study will explore the journey of learning for prospective teachers in Early Childhood Education. They will be studied in the practicum setting and again on their return to the university classroom, in

order to follow the connections which are made between the practice of teaching and the learning of theory through the writing of journals.

As I follow these preservice teachers along the path of becoming professional teachers, the following questions will be addressed:

1. How do student teachers use journal writing to uncover their thoughts and discoveries?
2. Does the practicum phase of teacher education in Early Childhood have a significant influence on the thinking and learning of preservice teachers as related to their preparation in the university classroom?
3. Does the process of dialogue journal writing enable the student teacher to make connections between theory and practice?
4. Can teacher educators use journal writing to help student teachers understand the linkages between theory and practice in the education of young children? How may this be done to best advantage?
5. How can teacher educators arrange the sequence of theory and practice in order to best facilitate the learning and understanding of early childhood students?

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study will not be generalizable to student teaching programs in other settings due to the specific nature of the setting. However, the findings will become part of a growing body of knowledge which will then be generalizable.

Definition of Terms

Reflective dialogue journal. Personal writing which is shared with another individual, using expressive language, through which "we work our way into new understandings and give shape to our thoughts" (Montgomery, in Carswell, 1988, p. 105).

Preservice teacher. A student at any stage of his/her education and preparation to be a professional teacher.

Field service/practicum. The phase when a student teacher goes into the school classroom under the supervision of a cooperating teacher in order to practice teach and put to use the theory learned in the university classroom.

Significance of the Study

> There is an urgent need for research in teacher education to turn its attention to closer and more subtle analyses of the impact of university courses, symbols, procedures, and rituals upon the professional perspectives of student teachers. (Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1981, p. 10)

This study will give some insight into the effectiveness of current strategies in early childhood teacher training. It will explore, through the use of shared reflective dialogue journals, how preservice teachers develop an understanding of their profession as they "simultaneously teach, learn about teaching, and reflect" (O'Loughlin and Campbell: 1988, p. 45). Roderick (1986) asserts:

> If students are given an opportunity to examine their interactions ... they might see how they too can come to know themselves better by examining the nature of the gifts they give, how they receive the gifts of others, and how others respond to gifts offered. (p. 311)

Summary of Organization of the Study

Chapter two will contain a review of current research on issues related to the field service component of teacher education in Early Childhood Education. I will consider the perceived benefits of student teaching and the question of conformity and socialization in the practicum classroom as it relates to the emerging beliefs of the student teacher. The role of the practicum triad of student teacher, cooperating teacher, and faculty consultant is crucial, so I will address the question of the matching (or otherwise) of the student teacher to the cooperating teacher and the faculty consultant in terms of their respective beliefs, teaching style, and supervisory style.

I will also examine research on dialogue journal writing. If students begin to reflect on their learning, they may find relationships between theory and practice and one way through which they might find this link is by shared relective dialogue journal writing. Chapter two will also review research on journal writing and how it is currently being effectively used in the educational milieu.

Chapter three contains the design of the study, including information about the informants, methods of data collection, and how the data were analyzed.

In chapter four, there will be a description of the process of gathering the data and how I proceeded with this task. I have included, at this point, a summary of the early school experiences of the five informants, as this could be considered relevant to the outcome of the study.

Chapters five, six, and seven are related to the stated questions of the study. They are also concerned with how reflective dialogue journal writing enables student teachers to make connections between theory and practice, and how the informants used their journals to uncover these connections. The influence of practicum once the students have returned to the classroom will also be considered. There are some resulting implications for teacher educators in terms of a) the use of dialogue journals in practicum and the university classroom, and b) the arrangement of the sequences of laboratory and theoretical learning.

Chapter eight will contain a summary of the findings, some conclusions, and implications for further study.

CHAPTER II

RÈVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Smyth (1989) states, "Because teachers interact with the world around them and make sense of it, adapt, and refocus what they do, we can no longer defend teaching solely in terms of competence in prescribed skills, pedagogical or otherwise" (p. 167). The basic change in the nature of education, and the general and specific knowledge base over the past several years means that teachers must help children to learn how to learn, and to know how to use that learning in their lives.

It is assumed that teacher education programs will espouse this same goal, and encourage and guide preservice teachers to look critically and reflectively at their own learning and teaching in an effort to keep pace with the changes in today's world. "Rather than focusing merely on technical adjustments, ... field experiences should be developed to promote reflection, experimentation, and responsible decision making" (Goodman, 1988, p. 45).

Preservice teachers frequently discuss and question the relevance of their theoretical studies in relation to classroom practices (MacKinnon, 1987; Tardif, 1985a). It is the responsibility of teacher educators to help their students make the necessary connections through the study of

educational theory and philosophy and the experience of practice in the classroom; therefore, as Jones (1984) notes, "Effective socialization into a role requires laboratory as well as lecture" (p.187). In addition, preservice teachers need to be able to reflect thoughtfully on their own teaching experiences in relation to the theories that they are learning and those (which may be different) that they encounter in the field.

Educators are coming to understand how students of all ages reflect, learn, and understand their own thinking through the use of personal journal writing. Forster said, "How do I know what I think until I see what I say" (in Holly, 1989, p. 3). This phenomenon happened to Liz as she excitedly discovered what she had written right after she had put the words down in her journal: "Wow," she said, "this is neat. I had no intention of ever writing all that. It was funny; the revelation happened only at the exact moment I wrote about..." (April 6, 1989). Journals are believed to be one of the most powerful stimulators of cognitive knowledge. Vygotsky writes of what he calls recursive, or reflexive interaction between cognitive processes and linguistic expression:

> The relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought. Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. (in Lund, 1984, p. 12)

The Significance of Practicum

According to Frye (1988), "Student teaching is generally considered to be the most important element in the teacher education program" (p. 54). Fields (1988) states, "Student teaching has been widely termed, especially by students, as being the most significant part of professional education programs" (p. 43). Tabachnik and Zeichner (1984) argue, "Student teaching does have a significant impact on the development of teachers, an effect that is strengthened during the early years of a teacher's career" (p. 29). This statement is corroborated in Richardson-Koehler (1988) where a group of cooperating teachers "felt that the strongest influence (both positive and negative) on learning to teach was their student teaching experience. Only one could not recall it" (p. 30). In a different study on the field service component of teacher education, Ross (1988) writes: "Because of the importance of role-playing [practicum] in the professional development of teachers, field experiences are considered the most significant events in the preservice teacher's professional preparation" (p. 107), and in the same study a student teacher commented, "Field experiences are the most important because you are doing it. You learn directly from your mistakes. You see your mistakes much faster" (Ross, 1988, p. 104). Zahorik (1988) reiterates these opinions when he states, "Student teaching is seen as being helpful, often to the point of being judged the most important aspect of teacher preparation" (p. 9). However, as he points out, "The support for student teaching by teachers and also by teacher educators appears to be overwhelming, but it is not unanimous" (p. 9). Goodman states, "It cannot be assumed that just placing students in practicum sites will automatically provide them with valuable experiences" (in Ross, 1988, p. 107).

Limitations to the Effectiveness of Practicum

The volume of research on the field service experience implicitly acclaims its importance as perhaps the most influential and effective phase of teacher education. There is, however, an equal quantity of research which suggests limitations to this view. Copeland (1989) states:

> Student teachers' ability to use the many skills they learn during their university training depends not only on the quality of initial training they receive but on the environment in which they must practice use of those skills, their student teaching classrooms. (p. 194)

Within the environment of the practicum classroom, there are several variables which can influence the effect of the practicum experience on student teachers: the quality of supervision and the resulting interrelationships of the practicum triad (student teacher, cooperating teacher, and faculty consultant); the perceived (by student teachers) relevance of the university courses; the expected (by cooperating teachers) conformity of student teachers in the practicum classroom to the norm of that particular room; and the socialization of student teachers as they move away from university learning and spend time in the classroom.

Supervision and the Practicum Triad

Supervision. Much research has been done on styles of supervision and methods of observation of preservice teachers. There are two primary styles of supervision, the proactive and the reactive. Those who are proactive tend to approach supervision in a reductionist way, in which "teaching is broken down into smaller and smaller observable and measurable fragments of behavior" (Smyth, 1989, p. 166), and those who are reactive will endeavour to assist student teachers to become "creators of meaning, interpreters of the world and all it asks of them" (Hargreaves, in Smyth, 1989, p. 167).

Though it is useful to be able to describe in detail, to student teachers, the significance of their behaviour in the classroom, given the above comments about the changes in the nature of education, it is perhaps better to allow preservice teachers the chance to reflect for themselves in order to understand their actions. Fay views this kind of supervision as "abolishing privileged, elitist forms of supervision and replacing them with forms that stimulate dialogue about teaching and learning in schools; the discourse contrasts the pedagogic" (in Smyth, 1989, p. 171). When student teachers are not encouraged to look closely at their teaching in such a developmental way, "supervision is likely to remain primarily an evaluative, rather than an educative, process" and supervisors will "take on the role of an evaluator rather than a support person who is to coach the student to improve performance" (Hoover, O'Shea, and Carroll, 1988, p. 22 - 23).

If the practicum supervisors are to accept a coaching role, it follows that they require the mastery of such skills as "knowledge of effective instructional procedures, ability to promote student teacher trust in the

supervision process, communication skills, data collection skills, and conferencing skills" (Morehead, Lyman and Waters, 1988, p. 41). Because most practicum supervisors are not regular and full time employees in these positions, they have usually had minimum training in supervision skills, so that in order for them to be effective, some kind of training should be offered; however, this can be an expensive proposition.

There are, though, some collaborative models between university and school, which either rely on the faculty consultant to pass along the skills (Morehead, Lyman and Waters, 1988); or they rely on the school to sustain a major role (Frye, 1988). The schools could also assist by "improving both the selection process and the preparation of supervising teachers with whom students are placed" (Fields, 1988, p. 44).

The practicum triad. The practicum triad is like an equilateral triangle: though each of the members of the triad may be studied individually, it is equally as important to look at all three at once. Mireau (1978) expresses the importance of "the equal commitment of all three members" (p.5) of the triad, and points out that "the success of the triadic unit depends on a solid interrelationship of mutual respect and willingness to work together" (p. 10).

The practicum classroom is the place where student teachers initially acquire "many skills by observing the model offered in the classroom by the cooperating teacher" (Copeland, 1980, p. 198). However, according to Tardif (1985a), "Students come to a teacher education program with a definition of the situation based on their [own] experiences at school and the influences of significant others (parents, previous teachers, peers)" (p. 85). O'Loughlin and Campbell (1988) feel that "theories that have been

built up from salient personal experiences" are found in students who demonstrate "highly developed implicit theories of teaching ... since they are likely to have been benevolent and assiduous observers of the schooling process" (p. 27) through their own childhood years in the classroom. This theory is consistent with other findings that the teacher's conception of teaching may have been influenced more by previous experiences as a student (MacKinnon, 1989; Tardif, 1985b). Jones (1986) supports this view: "Teachers are more likely to teach as they were taught than as they were taught to teach" (p. 124).

But whatever the student teachers' experiences and background when they come to the practicum classroom "few disagree that cooperating teachers exert great influence in teacher education" (Yee, 1969, p. 327), as the cooperating teacher is "the primary factor intervening in the student teacher's use of the classroom" (Copeland, 1980, p. 195). It is cooperating teachers who have day to day responsibility for student teachers, and who are under the constant scrutiny of student teachers as they model actions in the classroom. Since cooperating teachers are present through all the daily routines, they gain a true picture of the student teacher's performance in their classroom, and in this active role they need to be "skillful in demonstrating specific strategies identified as components of effective teaching and supervising" (Frye, 1988, p. 56). Bolin (1988) writes of student teachers' "latent philosophy of education" (p. 53), and Morehead, Lyman, and Water (1989) suggest that cooperating teachers (and faculty consultants) need to have the skill to bring "this intuitive knowledge of effective teaching to a conscious level" (p. 41). The role of the cooperating teacher, therefore, is very specific in that it requires many skills and strategies.

Wolfe, Schewel, and Bickham (1989) state, "Classroom teachers are more willing to accept student teachers knowing they will have the continuous support and guidance of ... faculty members who are in close proximity" (p. 69), and a cooperating teacher I know referred to this as a sort of "parental contact" with the university. Hoover, O'Shea, and Carroll (1988) delineate several skills and responsibilities required by faculty consultants, which range from supervisory, evaluative, interpersonal, and communication skills to management and scheduling requirements. "Without a careful orchestration of these supervisory responsibilities," say the authors, "the quality of conferences will be poor, the visitations reduced, and improvement in the [student teacher's] performance limited" (p. 23). Faculty consultants are sometimes called upon to coordinate the training for cooperating teachers who are not experienced in their role, and workshops and inservice sessions are useful methods for delivering this information. Fields (1988) offers an instructional model for supervision of student teachers by cooperating teachers which consists of a series of seminars conducted by university personnel. He acknowledges that this could be expensive both in time and funds, but states:

> It is certain, in my opinion, that we will get no further in what we so often say that we desire, more knowledgeable and skilled supervising teachers, unless we start somewhere rather than simply assuming that the hurdles towards more fully qualified supervisors are too difficult to attempt to jump. (p. 52)

This strategy would enable a continuity of requirements which could meet both the university's standards and the school's needs.

Relevance, Conformity, and Socialization

Much has been written about the dichotomy between theory and practice in teacher education. Blakey and Everett-Turner (1988), Erdman (1983), Joyce (1988), MacKinnon (1987), Stover (1986). Zahorik (1988), and Zeichner and Tabachnik (1981) all discuss the problem of relating the relevance of the content of university courses to preservice teaching and in particular to student teaching.

Bunting (1988) maintains that "the progressive thinking generated by preservice training undergoes a reversal beginning with student teaching and continuing into later teaching" (p. 42). Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) concur with this statement when they describe several studies in the United States and Britain showing the regression of student teachers and early inservice teachers. This decrease in progressive attitudes was often caused by being placed in a practicum classroom where the teacher had a more traditional pedagogic approach. MacKinnon (1989) writes about several student teachers in field service, and though they had wished to try out approaches learned in university classes, the pedagogy in most of the school classrooms precluded this: "On the surface, it looked as if the hours spent in [university] classes had had little effect" (p. 10).

There is a need for preservice teachers to be able to rationalize what they see happening in school classrooms (when it is different from what they are learning in the university classroom), and to make connections between what they have learned and what they might see. Tardif's (1985b)

students found that "it was easier to accede to the way things were than to attempt to change a situation within the limited time period they [student teachers] were in the school. There was continual pressure on the students to conform to the way things were generally done" (p. 144), and thus they were unable to practice what they had been taught.

MacKinnon's (1989) student teacher informants "claimed that if they were in their own classrooms, things would be different" (p. 10). They conformed temporarily, but intended, eventually, to put into practice what they had learned in university. It is in this case that the benefits of practicum might be questioned. Zeichner and Tabachnik (1981) explain: "[It] is not so much a change in attitudes as it is the removal of a veneer that had temporarily been adopted by students in response to what they saw as the prevailing progressive ideology of the college" (p. 8).

Relevance and Design in Teacher Education

In the face of such conflicting theories, the question arises whether the practicum phase of teacher preparation is indeed as useful and as beneficial as some of the research claims. If it is, then how can teacher educators prevent the ideals of student teachers from being "'washed out' by the school experience" (Zeichner and Tabachnik, 1981, p. 7); how can the connections be made between the theory and practice?

In a paper presented at the International Study Association on Teacher Thinking in Nottingham, England, Blakey and Everett-Turner (1988) call for relevance in teacher education courses. Teacher educators need to "help students experience the ongoing relationship between theory and practice" and this must be achieved by "continually reflect[ing] on our

role in assisting students and teachers to examine the relevancy of learning in the broadest sense" (p. 11). If theory, as it is presented in the university classroom, is not connecting with what student teachers encounter when they enter the school classroom, then they must be helped to work sequentially through their dilemma using their existing knowledge to make links with what they encounter in the field. In order to accomplish this goal, teacher educators must find ways to prepare their students accordingly. Through the sequence of their preparation, preservice teachers need to learn to reflect thoughtfully on their own practical teaching experiences in relation to the theories that they are learning and to the teaching styles that they encounter in the field.

Reflection Through Journal Writing

Journal Writing in History

The earliest journals date from around 56 AD in China, when they were kept as historical documents, and throughout history they have fluctuated back and forth as both public and private documents (Lowenstein, in Fulwiler, 1987). Since then, personal journals, in the form of diaries, have been used by many to discover and clarify their ideas and thoughts on numerous topics; not least among these were the mysteries and ambiguities of life itself. People such as St. Augustine, Samuel Johnson, Anne Frank, and Graham Greene are known for their diary writing, much of which has been widely published. A glimpse into the personal lives of these people, through reading their diaries, reveals how they were thinking and what they were discovering at the time of their

writing. Similarly, students in the process of professional preparation may write journals and reveal what they are thinking and learning. Craig (1983) calls journal writing "self-expressive, and reflective writing [that] one can do as a way of understanding self" (p. 373).

In areas other than education, Heintze (1987) describes the successful use of journals with disturbed youngsters, and Raskinski and Allen (1988) write of using journals as communication tools between family members: "The roles that the journals played in their relationships were opportunities to share thoughts, to solve problems, to gain information and to express feelings" (p. 3). As Britton explains, "An essential part of the writing process is explaining the matter to oneself" (in Berkenkotter, 1982, p. 39).

Journals as Learning Logs

Though personal journal writing is an accepted and widely used process for self-discovery, several different journal strategies are currently being used in the educational and social milieu for many purposes. Sobray-Evans (1984), using journals in the math class, points out that, "like reading, writing can be a powerful learning tool" (p. 828). She used three types of writing with her young students: explanations, to describe how to do something; definitions, to describe a process; and "troubleshooting", to explain errors or problems. Sanders (1985) writes of her language arts class, "Students can learn *from* writing rather than writing what they have learned. It has liberated ... teachers from the tedium of grading every written shred and from the boredom of reading regurgitated facts and ideas" (p. 7). Staton (1988) points out that for children, "Journals are not a

method of instruction in specific skills; they provide opportunities to use newly acquired abilities in writing and reading" (p. 199).

Journals are not only used in classrooms for younger children, but they are also coming to be used extensively in college and university classes. "Writing need not be only a tool for assessing learning in teacher education; it can also be a method of enhancing learning" (Stover, 1986, p. 20). Crowhurst (1988) describes a study done in a language-across-the-curriculum course which was a compulsory course for students in their professional year in a variety of disciplines such as social studies, music, science, modern languages, and others. They used several strategies, writing mostly in the classroom, and at the end of the course there were significant changes of attitudes in the participants:

> They listed numerous specific values that writing could serve: the building of a supportive cooperative classroom environment; the improvement of attitudes towards the subject; the promotion of higher level thinking; the creation of active, involved learners who would take responsibility for their own learning rather than being passive recipients of information, predigested and doled out by their teacher. (pp. 188-189)

Journals as a Cognitive Process

Perhaps the widest application of journals has to do with understanding and thinking, and it is practiced by students who range

from pre-kindergarten to university levels. Early writing experiences "enhance development in such language arts skills as oral language, listening, and reading itself" (Hipple, 1985, p. 255), whereas at the highest level the students are using their journals to reflect and dialogue about their learning. The connections between writing and cognition are coming to be understood more clearly, and, as Yinger (1985) points out, "Not only has written language provided mankind with a powerful means of expression and communication, but ... written language fosters many higher cognitive functions" (p. 21). Further, Kent (in Fulwiler, 1987) writes:

> Thinking ... is essentially related to writing. Writing involves expressing one's ideas into words, which in turn involves crystallizing or clarifying the ideas for oneself. In this sense writing is thinking. A journal, then, is a place to practice thinking. (p. 269)

Yinger (1985) states that journal writing "creates a situation encouraging reflectiveness and explicitness, often leading to an awareness of a person's knowledge" (p. 25). Burgess points out, "In the journals we can evaluate and come to terms with the world in which we live" (in Simpson, 1986, p. 38). Holly (1989) maintains that, "writing facilitates consciousness of unconsciousness" (p. 58), which is another way of explaining Polanyi's theory of tacit knowledge (in Carswell, 1988), and Schon's "reflective practitioner" (in Holly, 1989).

"Progoff believes [that] changing perspectives aids the journal writer in establishing a new relationship to the events, people, projects, and ideas in his/her life" (Lowenstein in Fulwiler, 1987, p. 95). He calls the journal a tool, "an instrument for recording and then evaluating ... a means to reflection ... its essence is subtle movement and change ... a collage of life in motion" (Progoff, in Holly, 1989, p. 20).

Dialogue Journals

> A dialogue journal contains a genuine conversation written rather than spoken, a means by which individual students at any age can carry on a private discussion with their teacher.... The distinguishing characteristics of dialogue journals are their interactive, functional nature. (Staton in Fulwiler, 1987, p. 49)

A dialogue journal is personal writing, using expressive language, which is shared with another individual. Dialogue journals should be

> student generated (students choose their own topics, the time they will write), interactive (the writing in many ways resembles oral conversation in that the writers take turns and can respond to each other immediately) and functional (students describe their activities and feelings, complain, praise, make requests and offers, ask questions, and generally build a relationship with the teacher). (Kreeft, 1984, p. 143)

In most classroom situations the journal partner is a teacher, but much is to be gained by sharing with a peer. It is possible that writers will share more easily with someone who is at a similar age and stage, and who might more easily understand their feelings. However, if the journals are to be used to lead the writers towards higher level cognitive understandings, then the respondents should themselves be at a higher level of understanding. Whoever the journal respondent might be, sharing journals with an understanding and sympathetic person who is "simply an interested and non-evaluative ... listener" (Lund, 1989, p. 38) will facilitate a greater depth of understanding and learning.

Debriefing is important in experience-based learning. "Simply to experience ... is not enough. Often we are so deeply involved in the experience itself that we are unable, or do not have the opportunity, to step back from it and reflect upon what we are doing in any critical way" (Pearson and Smith in Boud, 1985, p. 69). Since practicum is certainly experience-based learning, and sharing dialogue journals could be considered a form of debriefing, perhaps in writing their journals, student teachers will step back, reflect and thus learn. They will understand, deriving joy and satisfaction as they uncover their own hidden thoughts, make sense of their world, and discover just how much they know.

CHAPTER 111

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the journey of learning for prospective teachers in Early Childhood Education. The primary method of uncovering this growth was the dialogue journal. I used oral dialogue in informal interviews and also observation in both practicum and university classrooms. The dialogue was recorded by means of audio tape recordings and written field notes and the observation was recorded by means of field notes, a personal journal and audio tape recording of my immediate impressions upon leaving the scene.

I first observed each of the two primary informants in the school classroom during their final practicum which was mid-way through their third year. Later, I observed in two consecutive early childhood education classes, one in the autumn term and one in the winter term. We began to share dialogue journals during the practica of Diane and Liz, and continued into the university classes. The secondary informants joined the study at the beginning of their fourth year where I observed them in the university classes and shared dialogue journals with them. Their entry into the study was not to be considered as a comparison, but rather because one of the primary informants elected to partner one of the secondary

informants in sharing dialogue journals during the two university classes. The other two secondary informants volunteered to take part in the study in order to widen its scope as one of the primary informants chose not to share her journals with a partner. I read and analyzed the early journals of both the primary and the secondary informants, but only entered into a shared dialogue with them at the time of their participation in the fourth year university classes. I also informally interviewed all of the informants during this time period by means of joint meetings, individual conversations, and telephone calls.

The Sample for the Study

The Primary Informants

During the process of developing the ideas for this study, I was assigned, as a graduate assistantship, to act as the faculty consultant for two early childhood education students who were in their third year of study, and about to enter their final practica. With the assistance of an early childhood professor, I was able to arrange that my consultancy was with two students who had shown interest in volunteering for my study.

Diane. Diane was a woman in her forties who was pursuing a long-postponed, yet long-desired career. She was born in a small Central Alberta city, but shortly moved to the capital. She attended elementary school on the edge of the city, which at that time was in quiet, almost rural,

surroundings. The rest of her schooling was in the same area, but as the population began to increase, the surroundings became more urbanized.

Diane had taken an education course in 1966, but after becoming pregnant with her first daughter, she had discontinued full time courses in order to raise her children, and had attended university intermittently during these years. While her two daughters were growing up, Diane had volunteered as a leader in "busy bees" and brownies and, because of this experience with young children, she was asked, in an emergency, to assist the local playschool teacher. She then continued to teach the afternoon playschool session for the rest of the year, and subsequently taught two classes the following year. Diane continued to take university courses part time and since she was "always going to go back," she eventually registered in a full-time education program. She immediately joined the early childhood route, having previously completed almost all of the requisite first and second year courses. (In this university, students with an early childhood major take one early childhood course in each of the second and third years, and two early childhood courses in the fourth year.) Diane clearly knew her goal: "I like the younger kids, they're more open, they haven't been programed yet, they give you the truth" (Diane, interview, September, 1989).

Liz. Liz was a young lady in her early twenties who had come to university directly from high school. She was born in Saskatchewan, but moved at the age of two weeks to her present home, a satellite city close to a large Alberta city, where she received all of her schooling. As a child, she loved school and always wanted to be a teacher. She did not want to do a "rigid" job "where you do the same thing day in and day out -- I like jobs

where you're with people. I'm very much a 'people' person -- something new can come up every hour -- you're with people interacting and you're growing with [the] experience" (Liz, interview September, 1989). Regarding her choice of early childhood teaching, Liz explained: "I grew up thinking that. Since I was in grade two or three, I was told by teachers I'd be a teacher. A kindergarten teacher, though." Liz then told me with great sincerity and feeling: "I love children and I just love watching them do things because they're so excited about it, and they have such joy with school and joy with learning, and so it's really contageous, and a very positive atmosphere." Thus she also chose the early childhood route.

The Secondary Informants

When Diane and Liz returned to university at the beginning of their fourth year, they were again required to write a journal in their early childhood class. It was optional to share dialogue journals with a colleague, and Diane chose to do this. Liz chose not to share her journal with another student and therefore only dialogued with the instructor and myself in her journals. From the time of writing her initial journals, Liz had written down many very personal thoughts and feelings, and though she felt comfortable sharing her journal with the instructors, she preferred to leave it at that level. Because Diane was the only one to share her journal with a partner, two more student teachers from the class, who had previously indicated interest in my study, volunteered to participate at this time.

Laura. Laura was Diane's journal partner in the two early childhood classes. She, like Diane, was an older woman with children who were of university age. She was born in Southern Alberta and received all of her schooling in Alberta except for grade 3 in Northern Alberta and grades 6, 7, and 8, in Oregon.

Laura's route into early childhood education was a process of evolution. She had been an aide in kindergarten for many years and with the encouragement of principals and teachers in her schools, she decided to pursue education herself. She attended courses intermittently over several years and also worked part-time. At the time of this study, she was completing her final few courses.

Sue. Sue was born in a large Southern Alberta city, but she spent all of her school years, except for kindergarten, in a smaller Northern Alberta city. Throughout her teenage years, Sue had been a lifeguard in a local swimming pool, and she always chose to teach the younger children, as she loved them. She spent her first post-secondary year in a community college and worked on an arts degree, thinking she would go into counselling. However, a friend who was already in the third year of the early childhood program told her about it and from then on this was the route that Sue pursued.

Toni. Because she was born into a military family, Toni moved fairly frequently during her childhood. She spent her first five years in a large Southern Alberta city, then three years in Ontario, two in Germany, and several on Vancouver Island, before returning to Alberta to her present home.

As a teenager, Toni babysat extensively for a young family. As she said in an interview, "I was almost a housemom for a good year", after school and on weekends. She had always done a lot of babysitting, and in grade 10, she started working in a day care after school and during the holidays. She went straight to university from high school as she "always knew" that she wanted to be a teacher. Her mother still reminds her of how she used to play at school and would line up tables and chairs and "teach." Toni, just like Liz, was destined to become a teacher, and began to pursue it just as soon as she could.

Methods of Data Collection

Dialogue Journals

Polanyi contends that "much of what we know is just below the level of awareness" (in Carswell, 1988, P. 108). It is generally believed that through the process of writing reflective journals, authors may come to know and understand their own thinking. I shared dialogue journals with Diane and Liz from the time of their final practicum in the second term of their third year (when I acted as their faculty consultant), until just about one year later when they were mid-way through the final term of their fourth year. They had also opened some early journals to me which they had written in the first and second years of their university education in courses other than early childhood. I read these to obtain a background for their current journal writing.

With the exception of the practicum journals, which were shared between myself, the cooperating teachers, and the primary informants, the

instructors from each of the early childhood courses dialogued with all of the student teachers during their journal writing. These early journals turned out to be exceptionally valuable manuscripts for my study, especially in one case, in order to trace their development as teachers.

Observation

Spradley (1980) describes participant observation as a funnel, where "the broad rim of the funnel consists of *descriptive observations* in which you want to catch everything that is going on" (p. 128), and the narrow end of the funnel represents the focused and detailed point of view. I was fulfilling a different role in each of the two settings where I observed (the practicum classroom and the university classroom), therefore I changed my approach to the task in each one. I observed Diane and Liz in their practicum classrooms, where I was their faculty consultant. Then the following two terms I observed all five student teachers in the university classroom where I was a participant observer.

Interviews

The words "meeting" or "conversation" might more correctly be used instead of the word "interview" in the context of this study. The intent of the study was to explore the journey of discovery that the students were making rather than to glean specific answers to specific questions. Therefore the conversations were usually unstructured and quite open-ended in order to allow the participants to proceed in directions which were important to them.

Organization of the Study

The study was divided into two phases and took place in two practicum classrooms, and the early childhood classroom on the university campus during three consecutive university terms. Throughout each phase of the study, three methods were used to collect the data: dialogue journals, observation, and interviews. For the purpose of clarity, the remainder of this chapter has been organized according to each phase of the study.

Phase 1: Student Teaching	Phase 2: University Campus Courses
Interviews	Interviews
Dialogue Journals	Dialogue Journals
Observation	Observation

Phase I: Student Teaching

Introduction

Diane and Liz were in kindergarten classrooms for their practica. They were in different schools which were located in a satellite town close to the city in which the university was situated. Both student teachers lived in the same town as their schools, which they had previously visited on other occasions. This enabled each person to feel immediately comfortable in her classroom. Diane and Liz spent eight weeks in their classrooms between February and April, a period which spanned the late winter and early spring in the province of Alberta. There were four classes, each

comprising of approximately 25 children. This meant that each student teacher met fifty children in the course of a day in a morning and an afternoon session.

Interviews

I met with Diane and Liz prior to their first visit to the practicum classroom. This enabled us to discuss the procedures and requirements of the university in relation to their placements. I was also able to talk with them about how my research would fit into this stage of their studies. Naturally the university requirements took priority, but into this we could fit our own agenda. As well as the weekly practicum observation meetings, I interviewed both of the primary informants at about the mid-point in the practicum and again at the conclusion. During the course of the practicum we shared several informal and spontaneous telephone calls from which I took notes.

Dialogue Journals

The practicum journals were written during Phase 1 of my study, so only Diane and Liz were participating at that time. I read their journals during my weekly observational visits to the schools, and I responded to them immediately. I felt that to take away the journals and return with them the following week could break the continuity of the respondents' thoughts and ideas and slow down the dialogue process. I also found that, for me, spontaneous response was effective. When I reread some of my

comments later in order to discover if I might have responded differently, I found that my reactions would have been just the same.

Observation

I observed Diane and Liz as their faculty consultant during their final practicum. Because I was in an evaluative position at this time, my observations began with a general view of the classrooms and the student teachers in relation to their pupils; later in the practicum I focused more on specified aspects of their performance according to the instructions in the practicum manual developed by the university. The conferencing after my observation visit was mostly concerned with what I had observed in the classroom, and I encouraged Diane and Liz to think about what had happened during that time, to what extent they were satisfied with their role, and what modifications they might make for the succeeding weeks of practicum. I sometimes gave them suggestions for extension of their ideas or encouraged them to think about further ideas. My observations were recorded in written form and I also audio tape recorded my thoughts immediately upon leaving the schools.

Phase 2: University Campus Courses

Introduction

My study took place at a large university in a North Central city in Alberta. After their practicum, the students attended their fourth and final year of teacher education. They took one course in early childhood

education in each of two terms. I attended the first class, "Play as a Teaching Strategy" for the entire thirteen weeks (see Appendix 1 for course outline). The second class, "Integrating Theory and Practice in Early Childhood Education" was a thirteen week course, but I attended only for the first five weeks (See Appendix 2 for course outline). The point at which I discontinued my attendance in the class was the point at which I ceased my official data collection. Apart from the necessity to decide upon a cut-off time, this was an appropriate point in the course at which to stop. It was around the time when all of the student teachers were applying for teaching positions and it was a time of excitement, yet also of trepidation.

Diane had attended her preliminary interview for a position with the Public School Board, and felt reasonably confident of the results. However, this first interview was only for the purpose of short- listing, so it would be some time before positions were known: "I am ever hopeful, however," Diane wrote in her journal (February 7, 1989). All of the student teachers were once again thinking seriously about their beliefs, especially since they expected to be questioned about them in the forthcoming interviews, and felt quite nervous about this. Liz mentioned in her journal that job seeking had "taken a front seat these days." She felt that she was speaking for most of her colleagues in saying: "likely most (ME!) don't feel absolutely confident in the interview area" (Liz, January 27, 1989). It seemed that we had come full circle together. This was the appropriate time to cease my data collection.

Interviews

At the beginning of term one, I met with all five of the informants so that I could explain the intent of the study. We also set up a procedure for circulating the journals. This was the first time that all five of the respondents had met together to discuss the study. I explained the prior involvement of Diane and Liz, and shared some of my expectations for the term. I also answered their questions. As the term progressed, I had some more informal conversations and telephone calls with the informants, some of which were held during class breaks, and others which were requested as we needed them. Most of these interviews were audio tape recorded or written up in field notes.

Dialogue Journals

The three secondary informants joined my study at the beginning of their fourth year when I began to share dialogue journals with them along with their instructors and journal partners. As with the primary informants, Laura, Sue, and Toni also shared their early journals with me. These early journals were from classes other than early childhood and, through them, I was able to get a sense of their early thinking and beliefs.

In the play course in term one, the primary informants gave their journals to me each week. Where I could (which was most weeks), I read, responded to, and returned the journals on the same day. I still found that spontaneous response was the best, and that continuity was maintained by this method. At this point, the respondents passed their journals on to the instructor for her response and, at some time during this process, they

exchanged with their class partners. During the integration course in term two, the procedure was slightly different in that the instructor responded to the informants' journals prior to my receiving them, which meant that this time I read them after the instructor had responded to them and a week after they had been written. Again, the journal partners exchanged and responded to each other's journals during the process. Once more I endeavoured to read and respond to the journals on the day I received them and, except in a few cases, I succeeded. Thus by the time the journals had been circulated, they had in fact been read and responded to by up to three people.

Observation

I observed all five of the informants in the university classroom in an attempt to paint a background for the dialogue journals with which I was to work. At first, I sat in the classroom and was simply a recorder of what was happening. I tried to gauge the atmosphere of the classroom and I specifically observed my informants and their interactions. I also took note of the instructional content of the class so that I would be aware of the whole picture as I later read the journals. In the beginning, I intentionally left my role in the classroom unspecified, as I wanted to wait and assess the approach which would be the most comfortable for the instructor, the student teachers, and myself. Quite quickly my role evolved more closely towards that of a participant in the classroom, due partly to the dynamics of this particular group of people, partly to my self-perceived role, and partly to the open nature of the instructors in each class. By the time we returned

for term two after Christmas, I felt as if I was truly a part of this classroom group.

Analysis of the Data

Because the purpose of this study was to explore the journey of learning taken by preservice early childhood teachers during two stages of their university education, conventional methods of quantitative data collection were inappropriate. This study, itself a growing and evolving process, could also be described as a journey. The thoughts, beliefs, and learnings of the participants were continually evolving and developing during the progress of the data collection, influenced in no small measure by the past experiences of their own school days and university courses.

During the process of sharing the dialogue journals, all of the participants (including the university instructors and myself), posed questions, made comments, and encouraged each other to think more reflectively. I also made note of my perceptions of the reactions and demeanour of the informants as their university classes proceeded.

Data from journal entries, audio tape recordings, conversations, researcher reflections, and observation notes were collected and analyzed for emerging themes and ideas. It was a process of absorbing the material in all its forms, and following through on ideas which emerged during the procedure. One informant had some very strong feelings about the role, for her, of journal writing. Even in her earliest courses she had believed in the efficacy of personal writing. There were also some interesting deviations from the outcomes which I was expecting and so, during the course of the

study, I was constantly required to assess and reassess how I would proceed as a result of these changing ideas and outcomes.

CHAPTER IV

GATHERING THE DATA

The Journals

How journals are used in classes

Journal writing is being employed more and more in university classes where there is a belief that journal writing stimulates reflection and helps students clarify their thoughts, and allows them to discover a level of tacit knowledge which is often hidden to them (Carswell 1988).

I have been asked to write journals in several of my university classes and their focus has changed according to the individual class. In one particular undergraduate class on children's language development, I regularly exchanged journals with a partner where we were required to discuss articles which we had been reading as a part of our class and to consider the class content. I had not previously known the person assigned as my partner, but during the process we shared a little about ourselves and at least attained a level of comfort in order to begin our task. We brought different perspectives to the interpretation of the journal articles because of our different backgrounds and life experiences, so as a result it was a positive and useful experience. The focus in this method of journal use was not really reflective in the sense of grasping for deeper knowledge,

but rather a sharing of our individual approaches to the works in question in order to broaden our understanding.

In a graduate research course, I was asked to write a journal which was to be shared with the instructor alone, and this one was more truly a piece of reflection. The participants in the class were required to write entries after each session, sometimes referring to a journal article, but more often referring to our own personal thoughts about the class discussions. This journal definitely encouraged the process of deeper reflection, and by the time the course was approaching completion I heard many colleagues, who had previously questioned the use of journals in the class, comment favourably upon the outcome.

In both of these cases, the journals were at times tedious - yet another thing to get done before the next class - but on the whole they were appreciated for what they had helped to accomplish, which was an understanding and appreciation of the material presented.

In the case of my informants, at least during term one, journal writing in a number of classes seemed to get out of hand. Diane was required to write journals in several of her courses and she noted that "while journals do give you a chance to reflect and offer some means of checking your growth, they do consume a good deal of time above and beyond the normal amount of work done" (Diane, April 21, 1990). She soon began to find journal writing a chore. Certainly if she put as much effort into the journals for the other classes as she put into the journals for her early childhood classes, then it is no wonder that she was burdened. The question arises as to whether journals can be overused, and this seemed to be the case in Term 1, at least for Diane. If this happens, how can instructors in different courses coordinate their use? Who would get

priority? And, would the outcomes of journal writing have the anticipated benefit?

Journals: Focus or Freedom?

Journals can be written in different ways. That is, there can either be a freedom of expression in which writers are left to choose their own focus, and perhaps to allow the direction to develop even as they are writing; or the instructor can focus the task towards a particular objective, thus directing the student towards a designated area of reflection. The latter can be useful, particularly in a practicum journal, because it works towards improvement in a given area of skill development. However, in this study, the former method was employed, and freedom was given to all participants to allow their journal writing to develop as they chose.

Journals in Practicum. During the practicum phase of the study, the students were directed to write in their journals every day if they could. There was to be no penalty if daily entries were not made, but it was highly encouraged in order to assist the preservice teachers to aim for a continuity in their thoughts and writing. Both Diane and Liz were faithful, and missed very few entries. Most of their writing at this time referred to what was happening in the classroom, and their thoughts about how they had coped with different situations. At the very beginning of practicum, there were a lot of entries about the delight of the new experience: "I forgot how wonderful it is to be among the fresh excitement children radiate" (Liz, Feb 2, 1989). Later, when the initial novelty was changing into the reality of what often happens in a classroom, their entries changed somewhat:

"Everyone just seemed to fall apart, and there was quite a bit of shoving pushing and hitting" (Diane, March 1, 1989).

Liz wrote as if she and I were engaging in a conversation, with questions and replies just as if I had answered her. She used many contractions ("be4"), and some colloquialisms ("Hey am I beat!!"), which rendered her journals a delight to read in many ways. Her style did not detract from her reflection; in fact, at times it seemed to enhance it as she really seemed to be thinking aloud as she wrote:

> I can't get over how different the two groups are. This is not to say one group is better than the other - only that they are very opposite. And I can't believe how much parents influence the group too." (Liz, March 3, 1989)

Diane's style was slightly more formal, yet she also wrote as if she were speaking. She used a computer and generated several pages for each day. She needed to write, and rarely missed a day even if she was very tired in the evening. In her practicum journals, she reviewed her day in detail, reflecting upon the success as well as other happenings: "I feel things are going much better now. The children are beginning to accept me as a teacher and I feel I have better control" (Diane, March 10, 1989). She also included a daily summary of the entry with important pointers for her own information. This process tended to make each entry quite long, and at one point I told her that she was not required to write about quite so much. Her subsequent entries did not shorten appreciably, so from this I deduced that she needed to write as much as she did. She was using her journal as a resource, as she noted book titles, ideas, and other resources for classroom

use. Not only was Diane picking up ideas from her cooperating teacher, but she was also sharing her own ideas which were often new to the classroom. Her cooperating teacher regularly read Diane's journal and commented usefully and positively on her entries, thanking her for different ideas as she shared them. Diane will definitely have a great resource collection to take into her own classroom as later she also used her journal to introduce, share, and review journal articles when she returned to the university classroom. There was a new article each week, often more than one. Her journal partner, and also the instructor, were certainly the richer for her efforts.

Liz, on the other hand, though she wrote about her ideas, noted most of her resources in another place and used her journal to comment and reflect on specific events during her day: "Oh, one thing I found really interesting was that we emptied the water table and filled it with rice -- boy, did the kids love that; they measured, scooped, filled, occasionally spilt..." (Liz, March 3, 1989). Most of her entries were at least a couple of pages long, but often they were shorter depending on the available time and her energy level, about which she commented from time to time: "I'd love to talk about this more but I'm just wiped. I'm looking forward to a quiet 'nothing' evening" (Liz, March 3, 1989).

Journals in the University Classroom. When Diane and Liz returned to the university classroom in the fall term following their practicum, three other preservice teachers joined the study: Laura, Sue, and Toni. I was now sharing journals with five informants and their instructor was also reading and responding to them. They were required to write journals for their early childhood class once per week and, should

they so choose, they could share with a journal partner. The partners would exchange and respond to each other's journals each week or at a mutually agreeable pre-arranged time during the term. Diane and Laura were partners, Sue and Toni were partners and Liz wrote alone, except for sharing with the instructors and myself.

The instructors' expectations for the class journals were that there should be freedom of choice as to what was written, with no particular focus other than the course content and its results. This soon caused me to question my own expectations and needs in terms of what I was hoping would result from the journal writing.

Dilemma: Guidance versus Freedom.

At this time in my study, I had some specific questions that I was hoping to answer by reading and responding to the journals. I had a dilemma. Should I, by my questions and requests, endeavour to influence the direction of the informants' writing towards my own study focus, or should I leave the authors to take their own direction? The latter, I believed, was where I would find a truer reflection for the student teachers, but would it answer my questions? Craig (1983) wrote that journal writing refers to "self expressive, and reflective writing one can do as a way of understanding self" (p. 373), and Stover (1986) noted: "Writers develop the skills of reflecting, clarifying, projecting, inventing, organizing, interpreting, discovering, analyzing, and studying relationships" (p. 20). I had hoped that my informants would benefit by sharing in my study, so the last thing I wanted to do was inflict further stress and time requirements onto them.

Already in class, as assignments became due, the stress level of the informants was building. They were required to write journals in several of their classes which was taking extra time. Many of their assignments were being done cooperatively, which required the coordination of several people, all of whom had heavy schedules with little time for project meetings, and deadlines were approaching. Consequently, the early childhood journals reflected this stress, and the students often wrote about the difficulties of time management and of their problems around this: "I have so many group projects this term and they are always a struggle. Someone always has trouble meeting " (Diane September 28, 1989).

In her later entries, Diane used her journal almost as a catharsis as, at this time, she was under considerable pressure and time constraint. "I still have a horrendous amount of work in November," she wrote, "but somehow it doesn't seem quite as bad" (November 1, 1989). The act of writing brought, for her, a relief in some ways, as once she had committed her thoughts to paper it seemed to lessen her stress: "Had a few minutes to spare before class today so just had to have my therapy session!" (Diane, October 10, 1989).

How could I, as a researcher who believed in the efficacy of freely written reflective journals, ask Diane and the others to concentrate on my needs rather than their own? Interestingly, in my own first journal entry of the term, I had unconsciously anticipated this problem:

> I hope they [the informants] still want to take part in my study. It would be awful to have to start all over again if they want to opt out. I guess it may be a question of time, so I need to

remember not to put too much pressure on them in terms of expectations. (September 7, 1989)

Eventually I decided to allow the writing to take its course, and to watch the emerging results. If my research yielded answers which were different from my expectations, then my study would perhaps need to change direction.

Observation in the University Classroom

First Impressions

I entered, with some nervousness and trepidation, into the first early childhood class of the fourth year, and I listened to the voices of people who knew each other and who were greeting and welcoming each other with joy. It had been almost seven months since most of them had last been together, because practicum had come prior to the end of the preceding academic year followed by the summer vacation. As I looked around, I saw another person who did not seem to know anyone either. She appeared to be a newcomer also. I happened to choose the table where she was sitting, and so we tentatively began to exchange a few words. As the early childhood students were arriving, the instructor was distributing course outlines and other pertinent literature, to a background of chattering and laughter. She also was talking to the students and welcoming them back after the summer break, congratulating some who had been married over the summer, and talking to others about their holidays.

Gaining Entry

We all introduced ourselves around the class, and as the individuals were speaking, I began to think about my place in the classroom. This was to be a new role for me, and I was hesitant as to just how I would proceed. I introduced myself and explained my study, requesting their permission to be a part of their class. I already knew Diane and Liz, and felt good when they welcomed me warmly into the classroom, but I was not sure what kind of a reception I would receive as a newcomer into such a well-established group. Should I try to blend into the background? Should I stay quiet? I am neither invisible, nor very quiet by nature, and in the normal course of events, I usually join in quite readily with whatever is going on, especially in a class which invites discussion and participation. This was going to be a difficult task for me. Would I blend into the class? Would I be too noticeable and too obvious? Probably. But how was I to do this and also be an observer?

I need not have worried. My role evolved as time progressed. I found myself signing up to take my turn to bring a snack, and I also found myself joining in quite naturally with the classroom discussion. In fact, the instructor asked me for my opinion from time to time, and when we had group discussions, I was accepted as a regular member of the class, one who sat at the back left hand table - part of the group. In the second term class, I helped the instructor with the organization of a project, and by this time I felt as if I were truly a part of the class. They all seemed to accept my presence, showed interest in my project, and towards the end of my time with them, they showed great warmth towards me in many ways, which was something I greatly appreciated.

Approach to Observation

As I proceeded with my observation, I varied my approach from time to time. Sometimes I took part in the class as if I were one of the regular students, and sometimes I sat back and merely watched. One of the assignments in the play course was for a group to present a play environment with centres focusing on different areas, such as natural materials, clay and wood, dramatic play, and so forth. For one of these sessions I participated by playing and moving around the different centres along with the other students. For another, I observed from a quiet corner of the room and watched reactions, interactions, and the play. For each, I was able to gain a different perspective. When I participated, I experienced a feeling of hesitation before joining in at a centre. I wandered around for awhile in order to check everything out before I began to play. In fact I behaved exactly in the way that I had observed the student teachers behave. I felt an empathy with them as I really knew how they felt upon entering the area. In classroom discussion later, we talked about how children react in the same way, yet we so often expect them to join in immediately whenever we offer them such choices. This assignment was useful for so many reasons, not least of which was the appreciation of children's feelings when confronted with new centres.

> It is interesting to note that everyone just kind of takes in everything before making a move .... Just think how children must feel when they enter the classroom and there are six new centres confronting them. It gives food for thought. Maybe

only one or two centres should be changed at a time. (Diane, October 9, 1989).

I enjoyed my time in the classroom with these preservice teachers, and feel privileged that I was able to share a part of their learning.

The Interviews

Introduction

So that I could begin to get to know the informants, my initial interviews with them were biographical in nature. I asked the participants where they were born and where they had received their early schooling. I believe that knowing how they had begun their own educational process would help me to understand to some extent how they had evolved to their present stage of life. Each one of them had vivid early school memories of one sort or another, and interestingly enough, each of these memories was more to do with the personality and characteristics of teachers rather than the lessons that had been learned in class.

Early School Experiences

Diane. Diane well remembered her grade 1 teacher. She was

> your typical old spinster type of -- she was really nice, but she was, I would think in her sixties in grade one and typical,

y'know, wore her hair in a bun and was a really tall skinny lady. (December 1, 1989)

This lady had quite a traditional approach, as did most of Diane's teachers then. Her grade 2 teacher was more relaxed and somewhat younger than her first one, but the teacher that she remembered in a negative way was her grade 4 teacher. This was the first time that she had had a male teacher, and she was quite intimidated by him. He sounded much different from today's male elementary teachers who are, for the most part, popular with both girls and boys.

Liz. When Liz spoke of her early schooldays, her whole voice changed and she was experiencing quite obvious warm memories of that time. With the exception of grade 2, when her father had an extended hospital stay which disrupted her school continuity at that time, she "loved school". Her immediate thought was of "fun and friends and teachers and reading for the first time" which was a great thrill for her. But her favourite and most memorable teacher was from grade 3, and with whom she was still in touch: "If I could be at all like her -- I'd like to go and watch her now -- for her teaching style" (December 1, 1989). Liz had such fond memories of her early days in school, it seemed evident that she was destined for early childhood education.

Laura. Laura, in contrast to Liz, had some negative memories that stood out in her mind. She had a teacher in grade 1 and 2 with whom she had had a personality clash, even at that young age. She told the story about how they had been required to wait outside for the teacher to let them enter the school. One day it was very cold out and the teacher was late for

school, so Laura asked the principal to let them in. The teacher was so angry with her for doing this that she made her stand for the whole morning. This memory has stayed with Laura down the years, demonstrating how such events can affect young children, and how negative as well as positive memories remain for a long time.

Sue. Sue's most vivid memories were mixed - one rather humourous and another negative. Because she had Irish parents, she pronounced some of her words differently, so she was sent to a resource room. This turned out to be a very positive experience for Sue, as the teacher used to plan many interesting experiences in her class. She even took the children to her home to show them her puppy dogs. "Looking back" said Sue "she taught us with a whole language approach" (December 1, 1989). This person was a contrast to her music teacher of whom she "was terrified."

Toni. Toni had begun school at the age of four years old, and had not had any problems until she reached grade 6 when, as she told me, "everything caught up to me." She had been going to repeat grade 5, but her teacher pushed her on and it was at this stage that she began to feel as if she could not do anything. She thought that she was useless. Fortunately for Toni, she had a memorable grade 6 teacher who encouraged her and made her feel like she could succeed. She told me about a ninety page book report which she did in this grade -- she still has it. According to Toni, this teacher turned her around. He taught her self-discipline and she credits him with her current success. "If it wasn't for him, I don't think I'd be here today" (December 1, 1989) she said, telling me about the huge British

Columbia high school spanning grades 7 to 12, which she attended after this grade 6 experience.

Summary

I shared dialogue journals written during practicum with Diane and Liz, my primary informants, and during university courses with their journal partners and the instructors of the courses. They were given freedom in their writing, and had no pre-set focus other than to reflect on course content. I was faced with a dilemma when the writing began to take on another direction, but felt that I must respect the freedom of the authors. Perhaps the role of journal writing in a university classroom was different from what I was expecting or hoping for.

Journal writing in the university classroom can be a useful tool in order to assist students to think reflectively about the content of their courses. It can, however, become an overwhelming burden when used indiscriminately in several classes at a time.

I often found that journal writing assisted the student teachers in a different way to that which I had expected; rather, I found that journals were a catharsis in which they could freely talk about their work-load and lighten themselves of a burden by talking about it. In that the journals were being written and the time was being spent on them, the students were fulfilling an obligation, but in some ways it was to a different end and often with different results than I had hypothesized.

Since I was assigned to my primary informants as their practicum consultant, and Diane and Liz had volunteered for the project, we had no problems in communication and fortunately we also got along well. My

entry into the university classroom, however, was another matter. It was necessary for me to work towards reaching a reasonable level of acceptance and admittance into the group. Fortunately this evolved fairly quickly for me, and built up to a high level of comfort over the one and one half terms of my participation in the class, after which I ceased my observations in order to begin my analysis and writing.

CHAPTER V

FACILITATING AND DEVELOPING JOURNAL WRITING IN THE CLASSROOM

Introduction

Holly (1989) calls the journal "a working document" (p. 20). She describes journals as a dialogue between objective and subjective views, where the writer describes events and then interprets them, and as a result new meanings evolve for the author. A journal is a combination of a log and a diary and she summarizes her ideas thus:

> The log is an objective record of information (pages read, attendance, activities, lesson plans); the diary is a personal document in which the author can record log-type information but is primarily a book for expressing the author's thoughts, reactions, ideas, and feelings related to everyday experiences; and the journal is a document that includes both the objective data of the log and the personal interpretations and expressions of experience of the diary, but which moves beyond these to intentional personal and professional reflection, analysis, planning, and evaluation. (Holly, 1989, p. 25 - 26)

To get into the habit of writing is not easy, yet once an individual begins to write regular journals, their value and power is incontrovertible. The student teacher informants of this study were all convinced of the personal importance, for them, of journal writing and this is why they took part in the study.

Fostering thinking and understanding is perhaps the widest application of journals, and it is practiced by students who range from pre-kindergarten to college and university levels. At the earliest stages, the children are constructing a "bridge from talk to essay writing" (Kreeft, 1984, p. 141), and at the highest level the students are using their journals to reflect and dialogue about their learning. The connections between writing and cognition are coming to be understood more clearly and, as Yinger (1985) writes, "not only has written language provided humankind with a powerful means of expression and communication, but ... written language fosters many higher cognitive functions" (p.21).

It is personal journal writing, often in the form of diaries, that is an accepted and widely used process for self-discovery; however, there are several different journal types currently being used in schools, universities, and the public domain. All are used for different reasons and each needs different strategies and writing style for success.

Journals are very often used as learning logs, and Sanders (1985) discussed their use in such wide content areas as Health, English Literature, and Physical Education. In such journals, students might write specifically about what they learned in a class presentation, whether or not there were any questions, how they liked the class and so forth. Writing in this way can build a cooperative classroom environment by involving the students in their own learning and promoting higher level

thinking. This is closer to the way in which the journals were being used in some of the other courses for the student teachers.

Heintze (1987) described how she helped disturbed pre-adolescent students to try and discover their feelings through writing journals. The results differed from child to child, but by her thoughtful and questioning replies, she encouraged these young people to modify their attitudes and set some goals for themselves. Raskinski and Allen (1988) write about dialogue journals shared between family members for a variety of purposes. These include parents who work late nights and do not see their children often. One child wrote, "Dear Daddy. Look what I got at soccer today! Love Mikey" (p.6). Rachel, age 14, who was working through her anger at her parents for moving the family to a different city wrote with anger and passion:

> I think I'm saddest about the move. I've got to be. I cry every time it's even mentioned -- I'm gonna dehydrate!!! ....My attitude's not going to change. I cry every night -- I cry myself to sleep. (p. 3)

Among other things, these journals were fuctioning as a conversational partnership between family members; they allowed understanding and rapport and they created self understanding and self growth.

Similarly, the student teachers in this study used their journals for many of the same reasons. They grew towards an understanding of the profession of teaching through writing, asking questions and reflecting upon practice. Like Heintze's pupils, these student teachers set goals for themselves, from day to day in their practicum and to follow into their future teaching lives. Just as Mikey (above) wrote to his father about his

soccer, similarly Diane wrote to me about the exciting events which I missed in her classroom. When Rachel (above) poured out her frustrations in her writing, she was just like the student teachers in Term 1, when they were overloaded with assignments and course work and needed to use their journals cathartically to ease their frustrations and stress.

"An essential part of the writing process," states Britton (in Berkenkotter, 1982), "is explaining the matter to oneself" (p. 39). Progoff (in Simpson, 1986) believes that journals capture "the underground stream of images and recollections within each of us" (p.16). So it would follow that a dialogue journal shared with another individual should assist this process and enable the partners to "work [their] way into new understandings and give shape to [their] thoughts" (Montgomery, in Carswell, 1988, p. 105). Progoff , a well-known proponent of the process of journalling, points to the benefits of shared journal writing, "the presence of other persons ... each exploring the individuality of his own life history, builds an atmosphere that supports and strengthens his inward work" (in Holly, 1989, p. 27).

The journals which the students were writing were shared with more than one person. Not only did they have their classroom partner (except for Liz), but they also shared with their professor and myself. In Phase 1 of the study, I was both researcher and faculty consultant, and in Phase 2, I was researcher only, but in each phase I was sharing the student teachers' journals. I had hoped that the sharing of journals with a partner would facilitate a greater understanding and a deeper learning. Toni told me, after the study had concluded, that journals have helped her to be more reflective. She said, "If I was not writing in the journal, I wouldn't have thought about things in the same way" (Toni, April 21, 1990). When first writing a journal, it is sometimes difficult to begin. However,

these student teachers had written journals before, so they were quite comfortable with the task from the outset.

There are several issues which have emerged over the time that formal journal writing has been practised in schools and universities. As a result, there are some guidelines which have now been generally accepted for the use of journals in the classroom.

Guidelines for Journal Writing

Journals in many forms are currently used in classrooms from kindergarten to university level, and though they appear to provide a solution to a wide range of educational and social problems, there are a number of dilemmas and issues which may prevent their successful use. A number of guidelines for journal writing emerge from the solutions to these issues. Mitchell and Cheverie (1989), Strackbein and Tillman (1987), Kintisch (1986), and Hipple (1985) all relate how they introduced journal writing into their classrooms and gradually evolved gideliness for their use. Interestingly, the guidelines seem to apply similarly from the youngest to the oldest writer. The issues around journals and the resulting guidelines for their use will now be examined.

Topics

There is debate as to whether topics should be allocated when assigning journals in a classroom, be it in a school or a university. Some students, even in university classes, find it hard to begin to write. Sometimes a starter sentence or a question will help the writer to begin.

They could be asked about the classroom content, such as "What did you think of the class today?", or they could be given a phrase such as "The most interesting thing I learned in class today was ...". Eventually, the ideas will become student-generated and topical, and therefore of interest and use to the students, so even the most stilted writing will begin to flow. As the dialogue aspect of the journals begins, the students will respond to comments and questions thoughtfully posed by the partner or the instructor, and a written conversation will develop. Diane and Liz, in their practicum journals, carried on an ongoing conversation with their cooperating teachers. They would ask questions, request book or song titles, ask advice or pass along new ideas of their own. They used the journals to plan for another day, reminding themselves accordingly:

> I must work on my strategies for control and develop systems of my own. The music and fingerplays seem to work best to bring the children back on task, but sometimes these are not possible. I am going to try A.M.'s suggestion of voice inflection -- lowering my voice and seeing how that works. (Diane, March 13, 1989)

Format

The issue of format is somewhat related to that of topic -- how much, how little, how often? The number of pages from the student teachers varied according to other workloads at the time. Diane always wrote several pages, whereas Liz sometimes wrote as little as one. On the other hand, when she had something about which she was excited or moved

(which was often), then Liz wrote several more. Once journal writing becomes a habit, there may be some days on which little or no writing is done, and this is acceptable, because soon the writing will again resume. It is not advisable to set limits, especially for reflective journals; however, if the reader has many students and little time, a reasonable limit may be agreed upon. When instructors or classroom teachers believe in the power of journal writing for their students, they make a definite commitment to this method of communication. They undertake to read and respond to what is manageable for them, and the commitment is mutual.

Coercion to Write

One of the most debated issues around the use of journals in the classroom is whether or not it should be mandatory in a classroom or a course. The very nature of journal writing suggests that it should be a spontaneous activity. However, until journals become "deeply embedded in the continuing life of the classroom" (Staton, 1988, p. 198), it is often necessary to make journalling a requirement rather than a voluntary activity. The student teachers all had several courses in both terms in which journals were required, and each course required the journals to be approached slightly differently. The time taken out of the day with this activity seemed unmanageable for the students. Liz was upset about this and in an interview stated:

> I think that's the unfortunate part with this term too. Usually I've used journals to be able to reflect, but with it being the last term of the last year, there are so many other things -- and

you're trying to find a job. Most of my journals haven't been up to my par, which is frustrating for me to do, because I usually like to use it for that. And because I'm just basically saying 'well today in class we did this blah, blah, blah, ...' and I don't get a chance .... I've just gotten so frustrated with being forced to do it (Liz, April 2, 1990)

Toni felt that sometimes she was just "writing for the sake of writing" (April 21, 1990), and Diane agreed; she related how she always seemed to be typing her journals into her computer late at night:

> I'm typing it at ten o'clock at night or something, last thing before I'm going to bed ...it's just coming off the top of your head, and some days you get on a real roll but you don't read what's coming out of there, you're just typing it. (Diane April 2, 1990)

The students felt that as a result of having several journals to write at once, all were less than effective. Another problem that began in the second term was that the responses were not as frequent or as regular as they had been.

Logistics

For several weeks at a time, in Term 2, the students did not meet for classes due to laboratory sessions outside of the university. This caused the journal responses to be irregular and thus disjointed. As a result of this and the pressure of writing so many journals concurrently, the student

teachers felt that their journals were not as valuable for them in Term 2. We had a conversation about this and Diane said:

> I just felt our class was very disjointed this time -- because we had so many long breaks.... Last time we had more of [a] rapport thing you know, you would ask a question and somebody else would answer it, and it would kind of go around, and you had a conversation going in your journals, whereas this time.... We've had no discussion back and forth. (Diane April 2, 1990)

Diane, Laura, and Liz explained to me that this was caused by missing a whole month of classes due to workshops and other arrangements, and they really wondered if journals were useful in this case. They had asked questions in their journals and did not get an immediate answer, and Liz remarked, "When you wait two months to get a response, it's not even important to you anymore" (April 2, 1990). All the student teachers felt that an immediate response is essential if possible, especially "if you want to get any kind of dialogue going" said Liz (April 2, 1990). The continuity, they concluded, was an important aspect of journal writing if it is to be effective.

Term I journal sharing worked better, as the students were in the classroom regularly once per week, and the only problem was to find the time to circulate them to the professor, their partner, and myself. As I was attending classes with them, I managed, most of the time, to read the journals on the day I was in attendance. One reservation I had was whether I should have taken extra time to read, reflect, and then respond. I tried this, and found that my responses given after more time were no

different than my spontaneous ones. Therefore I felt comfortable replying immediately, and thus contributing to the continuity of the circulation.

The logistics of immediate response during practicum were slightly easier, though an average of five entries were always awaiting me on my arrival. I had undertaken to respond to the journals on my weekly supervisory visit. This was a lot of reading each time, but it meant that I responded each time I was there, and did not waste yet another week by taking them away with me. The cooperating teacher was in the classroom, so it did not present too much problem for her to find a few minutes to regularly respond. However, the issue which often arises in this case is that there may not be a good relationship between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher, and the student may not feel comfortable to share what s/he has written.

Private or Public Journals?

Dialogue journals, by definition, are to be shared between two (or more) people so that there is an element of conversation between the partners. This dialogue provides the feedback for reflection and thought which in turn lends greater depth in thinking and writing. Sometimes, the student teacher and cooperating teacher do not share a positive rapport, and the student teacher may not wish to open his/her journals to the classroom teacher. However, if the student teacher writes with care and tact, perhaps asking questions of the cooperating teacher, the journals could then be shared and thus lines of communication would be opened. In this case, though, there would probably not be true reflection, as the goal of writing would be different. Student teachers who are in this situation are

often advised to have a few pages of private writing which they may detach from their journal.

Ideally, reflective journals should be totally private, and only then can an author write without inhibition. However, dialogue journals are defined as shared writing and, as such, may fulfil several purposes depending upon the developmental level of the writer. Teacher response for emergent writers can model correct spelling and grammar, as well as promoting further thought or reflection about a topic. Supervisor or partner response for student teachers can elicit reflection by means of thoughtful questions and timely comments.

The student teachers considered the journals that they were keeping for their early childhood classes and this research project as more purely reflective, but the journal for another class (movement) had a specified direction, and so took on a different dimension for them. There was less enjoyment in the writing of such a journal since there was less freedom, and in addition, these journals carried with them the drawback of evaluation, which is another issue connected with journal writing.

Evaluation

The movement journal was evaluated for content and was worth 30% of the final mark in the class. I believe this goes against the basic intent of reflective journals which mostly contain expressive and free writing; this is usually the most effective type of writing in this kind of journal. It should be the activity of writing, and the personal benefit to the students in terms of their growth and learning which is of value; having weight in marks is

detrimental to most of what a reflective journal stands for. Journal writing needs to carry with it a certain freedom, and if some writers do not produce correct grammar or spelling, this may be because, in the flow of their writing, they are unaware of their errors. To the writer, errors may not be relevant at this stage; it is the thoughts and ideas which are important, and only when the piece is ready for publication is it necessary to edit and perfect. When journals do not contain perfect grammar or spelling, it is often difficult for a teacher or an instructor to attend to reponses only and to read through a piece of writing without putting red correction marks across it. (This is a learning process for the teacher as well as the student.) I still have a dilemma in this regard. When I am sharing the reflective journals of third and fourth year student teachers, I accept that the journals are expressive pieces of writing, and I am often overwhelmed by the insights which emerge. However, when I see simple grammatical or spelling errors in the writing, and I know that this person will soon be in the classroom teaching children and writing to parents, I feel the urge to correct these errors. Sometimes I do. However, on the whole I prefer not to impede the flow of creativity. I prefer to allow, unfettered, the discovery and learning that emerges in the writing, and I make the assumption that some of these errors are made in the rush of expression (not to mention the rush of having to write several journals in a day). I must trust that those who read the formal papers of these students will catch that which I choose to ignore.

Diane was not happy about the way that journals were being used in her movement class, because, as she said, "You can't get true reflections, because you have to give them with a bias to what you know the teacher wants to hear" (Diane, April 2, 1989). Toni reiterated similarly when she told me, "you learn, after four years, what they want to hear" (April 21,

1990). Certainly the thought of being evaluated for something as personal as a journal went against all the values that we had been working with for over a year.

Staton (1980) writes about proficiency of writing in early grades:

> Whatever else leads to good writing, It seems clear that writing proficiency depends on practice, and practice of written communication in the journal involves practice of three levels of language: the surface forms of spelling, the syntactical rules for transforming word meaning into comprehensible statements, and the deep structure or semantic level. (p. 516)

She argues, similarly to Kreeft (1984), that it is the constant use of functional language which helps to improve the forms of writing such as spelling or grammar, and this is as valid at the university level as it is in grade school.

Issues of Ethics

Often dialogue journals become intimate documents, created by a mutual and deep trust between partners, which builds as they continue to share their writing. Sometimes this trust and intimacy may itself cause further dilemmas. Student teachers often begin to write about confidential situations in the classroom, perhaps with one of their pupils. Certainly, names must never be used, but care should also be taken to keep the journal in a private place, if writing such as this is engaged in.

It is more likely to be during the teen years that intimate disclosure would become an issue, because it is at this age that young people often begin to write about their personal problems. If a teacher knows that there are painful situations in a student's life, such as sexual or physical abuse, they are legally bound to disclose this knowledge. Simpson (1986) wrote of agonizing for a full weekend about how to deal with a "heart-rending outflow of raw emotion..." (p. 36) from a student, only to be told on Monday morning when he hesitantly confronted the student in question: "Oh that's all right now. I felt much better after writing all that junk down!" (p.36) . This disclosure law applies in the case of underage youths and in the Province of Alberta, if a teacher knows of such a situation, s/he must disclose the information to the Social Services Department of the Province. (This information was confirmed by a legal consultant at the Alberta Teachers' Association.)

At those times when there is conflict between cooperating teacher and student teacher in the practicum, and this is related (perhaps to the faculty consultant) in the student teacher's journal, the journal should remain private. However, if carefully approached, journals can have the benefit of opening dialogue about questionable areas, and thus smoothing the path of communication. If the student teacher and the cooperating teacher, together, work to resolve the situation, similarly to the above-mentioned teacher and adolescent, they might well do it through sharing journals.

Conclusion

Holly (1989) based her book Writing to Grow: Keeping a Personal and Professional Journal on a research project studying beginning teachers who kept journals throughout a school year. After only one day of writing one of her subjects very succinctly stated six reasons for keeping a professional journal: 1) You take time from the rush of the day to "actually do it"; 2) the writer begins to "figure out " things while proceeding; 3) there is a record to use for analysis and future planning; 4) thoughts and information may be added later; 5) "reflective writing enables learning from experience by capturing selected pictures" and highlighting important events; 6) by taking time to return to the writing, connections may be made which might not have been seen earlier. (Holly, 1989, p. 8 - 9)

Journal writing is used in many forms and for many purposes in the lives of children and adults, but the process of sharing dialogue journals is believed to be one of the most powerful stimulators of cognitive knowledge. Vygotsky (in Lund, 1984) wrote of what he calls recursive, or reflexive interaction between cognitive processes and linguistic expression:

> The relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought. Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. (p. 12)

Britton (in Berkenkotter, 1982) writes of the process of self-explanation, and Progoff (in Simpson, 1986), writes of the images from below the surface of our consciousness which emerge during writing.

Though journals are widely accepted and used in classrooms at all levels, there are many issues which need to be confronted and overcome in order for the process to be successful. Through practice, those instructors and teachers who employ the use of shared journals in their classrooms have defined rules and guidelines which they follow in order for the process to be an effective cognitive, reflective dialogue, which promotes understanding as well as observation.

Summary

Journals are a combination of log books (a list of events) and diaries (personal feelings and opinions surrounding the events). Journal writing usually begins with descriptive passages, which quickly begins to change to interpretive writing and thus to arrival at meaning. The students in this study appreciated the value of journal writing: Liz had been writing a personal journal since before she had graduated from high school; Diane began in university, but appreciated their utility and wrote reams each day; and the others all freely wrote and voluntarily took part in this study, for which they knew that they would be writing regularly.

There are many applications for journals, such as learning logs, counselling aids, conversational partnerships, and stress relief in the provision for catharsis through writing. They are currently being used extensively at all levels of education, from kindergarten to university, and in order to be effective, there are several issues which must be faced by the instructor/teacher so that workable guidelines for their own classrooms might be developed. These issues have been addressed from early

childhood to university levels by teachers and instructors who are using journal writing in their classes.

The issues around which guidelines may be formed are as follows:

a) topics - whether topics should be instructor-assigned or student-chosen

b) format - deciding how much, how little, how often, to write

c) coercion to write - whether journals should be compulsory or voluntary

d) logistics - how the instructor can read and respond to many journals regularly

e) private *versus* public journals - private journals ensure total confidentiality, public journals allow a dialogue partner which adds a wider dimension to the reflective process

f) evaluation - marking of journals leads to loss of spontaneity and honesty of thought

g) ethics - the question of assessing whether or not legal disclosure is required if this is what the writing indicates

As a result of these issues, certain guidelines for journal writing have been defined and are generally accepted and in common use in classrooms at all levels from kindergarten to university.

The chapter concludes by reiterating the importance and power of journals and states six reasons for writing journals as part of any person's professional life - especially that of a teacher. As Holly (1989) stated "perhaps the most genuine and important reason for keeping a personal - professional journal is that it helps the author to better understand him or herself, teaching, and the nature of the profession itself" (p. 9).

CHAPTER VI

DISCOVERIES AND EMERGING THOUGHTS IN JOURNAL WRITING

Introduction

As I was reading, sharing, and responding to the journals of Diane, Liz, Laura, Sue, and Toni, I often saw the process of thinking and reflecting that was emerging throughout their writing. They made spontaneous comments about almost every aspect of their courses, from how the material was organised to how they, personally, were relating to the content. They made comments about the stresses that they were experiencing from the pressure of due dates for assignments, and they even wrote about their uncertainties around their career choices. From responses to their concerns, made by the instructor in the journals, it seems that these thoughts are quite a common occurrence for student teachers who are moving through their preservice education. Feelings vacillated from a low of, "I spent the entire weekend planning and getting things ready -- I can see how teacher burnout comes about!" (Sue, March 20, 1989), to highs of, "I can't wait to have my own [class]room" (Laura, March 1, 1989). The doubts about their choice of profession emerged in both the practicum journals and the university class journals. These preservice teachers, by their writing, demonstrated to me that they were following Bruner's models of knowing as

quoted in Stover (1986), because they were using kinesthetic experience, visual experience and reflective experience:

> While writing, the writer is actively engaged in putting pen to paper, is seeing thoughts as they are captured on paper, and is thinking about the words and their implications. (Stover, 1986, p. 20)

As will become apparent, there was some difference between the type of writing which was done in journals written during the practicum, and those which were written in the university classroom. During the practicum, there was development from descriptive, journalistic writing at the outset, towards more reflective and introspective writing as the weeks progressed. In contrast, the course journals, which were written once the students returned to the university classroom in Term 1, tended to develop fairly rapidly into therapeutic, almost cathartic writing early in the term. The reason for this was because the pressure began immediately, and assignments and projects were very heavy both in the early childhood course and other courses in which the students were enrolled. The class journals from Term 2 were rather disjointed and discontinuous as in-classroom meetings were not held regularly. This was due to the nature of the alternating class/laboratory type of course in which many projects were done out of the university classroom.

In this chapter, I will examine discoveries that were made in the dialogue journals which were written during practicum and those written in the university class. I will examine themes which emerge in the practicum journals and in the university class journals and I will trace any themes which might be common to both stages of teacher preparation.

In Term 1 Laura, Sue, and Toni joined the study, so their experiences were added to those of Diane and Liz in the second part of this chapter.

Practicum Journals

Being a "Real" Teacher

Something to which Diane and Liz returned over and over again in their practicum journals was the feeling of being a "real" teacher. Early in her practicum, Liz wrote:

> I feel very confident now that things are going to go great. And I really believe the children accept me and respect me as their teacher. Although my name isn't always correctly produced I do hear "teacher" a lot -- and I have to tell you that stirs up a wonderful feeling. (Liz, February 22, 1989)

And later, when her cooperating teacher was away for the day and the class went on a planned a field trip, she reported with great pride and excitement:

> So this a.m. I WAS the teacher - there was [sic] no maybes about it....It really was neat! They were my class. The bus driver talked to me about the forms. The hostess asked me about what they studied in relation to the trip etc.. It was exciting. I actually was the teacher. (March 9, 1989)

Because of Diane's age and previous experiences, it might be expected that the excitement of feeling like a "real" teacher might not be quite so strong. This was not so. In the very first entry of her practicum she wrote, "Mrs. M. [cooperating teacher] has given me a desk and I am beginning to feel like a real 'teacher' " (February 20, 1989). A little further into the practicum she wrote, "I just felt generally better today because the children are beginning to accept me as their teacher" (March 8, 1989); and towards the end, as she was spending some of her time observing in other areas of the school she lost her anchor: "I feel very disjointed now that I am wandering around and am not the 'teacher'" (April 19, 1989). This was the final practicum, and even though there was still another year of university study left before graduation, these individuals were anticipating the future and realizing that the goal for which they were working was fast approaching. They were beginning to visualize themselves as "real teachers" and the practicum experience was bringing this closer for them.

Classroom Management

While Liz and Diane were in their practicum classrooms, much of their writing was concerned with management and how they succeeded, or not, in their day to day goals. They related incidents from the classroom and also wrote about their level of satisfaction with their approach. They also used the journals to modify their plans from day to day:

> It was a bit of a disaster there today as everyone was trying to get a turn. Tomorrow I am going to stay at the centre and we will only

have four people at a time. I will talk to them more about the function of a newspaper. (Diane, February 20)

It was important for the student teachers to feel successful in their teaching, but they also realized that they were in the classroom to experiment and learn, and for the most part they were pragmatic about their perceived "failures." They almost always found some way to learn from the situation. Liz related an incident where a tour for the morning kindergarten had taken over an hour, and during the same tour in the afternoon "we had an inexperienced guide who hauled us through the factory in 17 minutes flat!" (Liz, March 9, 1989). Of their return to the classroom, Liz recounted:

> Once at school it was one long struggle to keep them off the ceiling. By three ten we all collapsed. They weren't all that bad just EXTREMELY EXCITED and wound up. However it really wasn't all that bad. I did find out how flexible I was. With nothing planned I managed to come up with an afternoon of activities. (Liz, March 9, 1989)

Much of the writing referred to classroom control and whether or not it was attained. The feelings about control fluctuated considerably, and when one day the informants might have felt a measure of ease over the atmosphere in their classroom, " each day seems to go smoother and I am working hard" (Diane, April 5, 1989). Another day was the opposite: "the kids were higher than a kite today -- there was no bringing them down" (Liz, April 7, 1989).

Planning

Diane's journal entries were consistently long and detailed, and at the end of each day she wrote a summary. As well as providing a brief reference which she will easily be able to access in the future, this summary also served as a planning document to remind herself of techniques and strategies for the following day:

> Move the children in close to talk to them about any new concept otherwise the ones on the fringes will disrupt. Make sure you have the attention of all the children before you begin talking. (March 7, 1989)

and: "I will talk to the children next gym lesson again about watching their own space in order to avoid accidents" (April 4, 1989) .

On Liz' first day teaching alone, she commented on the progress of the morning:

> I think it went pretty well. Of course there's a few things I'd like to have done differently but that's the joy of kindergarten, now I can do it differently this afternoon. What I forgot this morning I can improve on for this afternoon -- maybe I'll just try and focus them on the "on task" situation. (March 6, 1989)

The journals helped Diane and Liz to see what was happening in the classroom, to plan, and to formulate strategies to deal with different situations

as they arose. Not only did their daily entries form a basis for the following day's activities, but they formed a practical reference for their future teaching.

Learning to Be Flexible

When lessons, which had been meticulously planned, had to be abandoned, and when plans were changed with little or no notice, Diane and Liz learned to be flexible. They wrote about this in their journals and Liz told about the day they went on a field trip, only to find on arrival that the dates had been confused: "While me [sic] and a few other adults tried to corral sixty pumped kids in one area Mrs. S. negotiated" (February 22, 1989). Toward the end of her practicum, Liz was presenting a "feely" day. She wrote:

> And I learned from it too. I tried some things I otherwise may not have, I know now what to change and why and how, and I came up with other ideas I want to try next time too. That's basically tho' what I do daily. So often without knowing I adjust, change, alter etc.. (April 11, 1989)

In her summary of March 13, 1989, Diane reminded herself:

> Be able to adapt and change any program at the drop of a hat, either because of weather or because other items change i.e. film comes in, sound centre not ready.... Adapt centres as problems are encountered. The smelling area had too many items to sniff and match.

On another occasion she wrote about a puppet play in which the children were involved:

> Today was the day they got up enough nerve to put on a show. It was quite a show and could have gone on forever! We missed most of our gym period because it was not until late in the playtime that they got organized and ready to go. This is why it is important to have a flexible schedule so that these exciting occurrences can be fully enjoyed. (April 11, 1989)

Both Diane and Liz experienced lessons that had to be abandoned either because of equipment problems, or because the children were just not interested at that particular time. One of Diane's most traumatic practicum experiences was when she persisted with a physical education lesson even though it was inappropriate for the children at that moment. I was there observing, her cooperating teacher was evaluating, and a parent was also sitting on the sidelines. She told me later that she would probably have discontinued her lesson had we not all been there, but she was determined to complete it in front of the three observers. It was important at that time for Diane to realize that flexibility is required whether she is alone in the classroom or not, and it seemed difficult for her to accept that we would understand why she had changed her plans. This must have been quite hard on Diane as she mentioned it again in a conversation almost a full year later. Liz, however, learned this lesson quite early.

On one occasion, when I was there, she decided to cut short her circle time because the children were not really interested. She had wanted to demonstrate her well-planned lesson to me, but flexibility on that particular

occasion was more important. I felt that she had made the right decision in the circumstances, but it would have been interesting to see if she would have done the same thing in Diane's situation, with three observers.

Diane was particularly keen for me to see her gym lesson because it followed a series of exciting classroom events that I, as her faculty consultant, had missed due to our scheduling arrangements:

> Well today was by far the most exciting day at kindergarten! Two of our chicks hatched.... It is too bad A.M. [faculty consultant] was not there today because it was a great day for everyone. (Diane, April 11, 1989)

Fluctuating Energy Levels

Liz and Diane were subject to alternating high and low energy levels throughout their practicum. It seemed that these rhythms often coincided with whether or not the children were also cooperating. This could have been a spiraling reaction: when the student teachers were tired, the children reacted, and when the children reacted, the student teachers became more fatigued. This not only created physical exhaustion, but it also added emotional stress to the experience. About a month into her practicum Liz wrote:

> Phew - I'm pooped. This afternoon was a madhouse....I'd love to talk about this more but I'm just wiped. I'm looking forward to a quiet "nothing" evening. (March 3, 1989)

At around about the same time, Diane too was feeling extremely tired and she noted:

> I am wiped tonight so cannot even think straight. I will try and reflect on my day some more later and possibly I will be able to add more. I find that I have very little time during the day for notes and I am generally looking at the broad picture. (March 7, 1989)

Though they wrote several times of their tiredness, both Diane and Liz had extremely high energy levels and put a consistent effort into their work in the classroom. They each mentioned the benefits of their respective ages, and since they were so far apart in age, it was interesting to note their similar opinions. Liz was quite definite:

> I personally believe that [a young outlook] is important....I think a young zestful personality is not only a plus but almost necessary. (March 20, 1989)

Diane, on the other hand, felt that her maturity gave her some advantages, and in one of our tape-recorded conversations she told me:

> I think that older students maybe have -- [pause] more idea of what they wanted to do before they started. I had a few beliefs that I wanted to go with -- that I felt that parents were really -- should be part of the classroom, because I felt strongly like that when my kids were in school and we were not part of the classroom. (December 10, 1989)

However, there were times during the practicum that Diane did feel her age, or at least she reasoned that her age caused her extreme fatigue from time to time. Once, when she was making a late-night entry into her journal, she wrote: "Well it is after 11:00 and I am feeling old and worn today--still recovering from yesterday--so cannot write anything else" (March 15, 1989). I had noticed that Diane often seemed conscious that she was older than most of her colleagues in the class, as she also mentioned her age on other occasions. Perhaps she felt that she should have had unending energy in order to compete with the younger students. Whatever her reason, Diane had an energy level far surpassing many of the younger members of her class, and she had no need to feel self-conscious. No matter whether the student teacher is young or older in years, practicum can be at once an exhilarating and an exhausting experience, and both Diane and Liz showed these contrasting feelings throughout their practicum.

Supervisory Relationships

A theme which emerged strongly throughout the practicum journals was that of the interrelationships of the student teacher and the practicum supervisors; that is, the three people who are known as the practicum triad. Because of basic changes in the nature of today's education, and the general and specific knowledge base which is so different from a few years ago, student teachers are being prepared to educate their pupils to learn how to use their knowledge both in the classroom and for life-long learning. It is therefore essential for student teachers to be appropriately trained for this role and to become "creators of meaning, interpreters of the world and all it asks of them" (Hargreaves, in Smyth, 1989, p. 167). Student teachers and their supervisors

must work together to practice extensive collaboration and communication in order to work towards competence in these areas. In the case of Diane and Liz, they were very fortunate in their cooperating teachers and both had a deep respect for the capabilities of these people. As for their faculty consultant, myself, the three of us were already working closely together for this study, and so a sense of collaboration was developed early. It needed but an extension of this feeling, shared with their cooperating teachers, to complete the triad. Other student teachers were not so fortunate in their supervisors; however, the development of this issue more properly belongs in the section "Perceptions and Connections: The Significance of Practicum", and so it will be studied in Chapter VI.

University Classroom Journals

Stress and Pressure

Workloads. Almost immediately in Term 1, the pressure began to show in the journal writing of the student teachers. Within the the first few days of classes they had received their assignment profile for each of their courses and right away they were immersed in preparation and planning for the rest of term. In her first journal entry for the term Diane wrote: "We already have an assignment due next week, so that will be a bit of a rush" (September 7, 1989). She had been thrust into the throes of the new term immediately, and to make matters worse, her computer broke down shortly after the term began. "It always fails me when I need it most" (September 12, 1989), she wrote.

Liz did not begin her journal right away with her perceptions of the workload. She had just returned from a summer trip to Europe and she

was still feeling the uplifting effects of her travel. The joy and overwhelming change that her experiences had wrought in her pervaded her first journal entry as she accepted that she was back into the routine of university life:

> Even as I return to school [university] and fall back into the endless catch-up routine, full of stress and competition, I have a calmness that is soothing. I believe more in myself and see this year as another step, a challenge, and I accept it. In the past I always fought it, panicked and even feared it -- not any more (however check back to me come exam week!). (September 14, 1989)

By early October, Liz did begin to write about the pressure of the workload in the early childhood course. She pointed out that though she appreciated the wide scope of the content that was to be covered in the final year, she was unsure about the relationship between marks and effort for some of the assignments. She felt that less effort would be expended on those projects which were assigned less marks:

> Sad as it is we operate under heavy time constraints and what logically occurs is the assignment with the least weighting gets the least attention. The incentive to achieve is lost behind the pressure to achieve in other courses. (Liz, October 11, 1989)

The invitation to check back with Liz (from September 14, 1989) was recalled when she wrote her journal entry during the play workshops which groups of students were presenting:

> These workshops are really becoming therapeutic and never before have I needed it more than this year. I cannot believe the stress and frustration I'm having. At times I just want to throw in the towel but fortunately (or not ? at times I wonder) I've been raised not to give up, so I keep on trying. (November 2, 1989)

Sue had a lighter load than the others and she chose to take on a position in the Students' Council. It was not long before she realized how much extra work this would entail. She wrote, "I am really looking forward to being on council and being really involved this year. But it's already more work than I expected -- I suppose it's because it's September. Once we get organized I am sure things will slow down" (September 11, 1989). One week later, Sue wrote more about her busy council schedule with two events in one week; however, as she points out , "I suppose it will be well worth it to get both events out of the way early, before school work gets too heavy" (September 18, 1989). By September 22, 1989, Sue became totally immersed in council work and wrote, "I feel I have neglected my school [university] work more than I expected to, and I need a chance to get caught up." Though she did not have quite the same pressure of work as the other student teachers with their heavy course load, her council work kept her very busy and began quite early to cause stress which was related to organization of time management.

Toni also wrote about her busy schedule, and, like Sue, she was sitting on the council at the beginning of term when all the organizational jobs were being done. She listed some of her extra curricular involvements in an early journal entry, and they included volunteer time as well as several fitness related activities. In addition to her early childhood assignments, she was

working on a creative dance assignment, and she wrote, "the completion of the week was spent on a dance assignment worth 60% of our mark. It has been a hectic time" (October 26, 1989). If Toni was continuing with all of her other activities, it was indeed a hectic time for her, and she did well to keep up.

Laura started the term with fewer courses than the others and had not been able to find a part time job to fill the remainder of her time. Her dilemma was that if she was not working, she should volunteer, but if she volunteered, she would not be available when a job came up. However, for awhile she was enjoying spending more time with her family, and they were also enjoying her presence. Shortly afterwards, she had a job offer, so her "pleasurable and relaxing last year [of university]" (October 19, 1989) was not to be quite as she had expected.

Group projects. There were several group projects in more than one course, and these necessitated coordination of several people's busy timetables in order to meet for planning and organization. Diane found this difficult to squeeze into her already full day:

> Our playground group worked on our project ....Hopefully we will get it ready to type before my heavy assignments. The latter part of October and all of November are disasters for me. I have so many group projects this term and they are always a struggle. Someone always has trouble meeting and it seems the days just fly by. I hate to put things off until the last moment. (September 28, 1989)

Diane had further difficulties with the group assignments as in her journal of October 10, 1989, she recounted how one of the participants had handed her 13 pages of summaries to edit instead of the one and one half pages that she had agreed to type. "I was a trifle upset," she wrote, "but again I did the best I could, however, it took me hours more than necessary and we are not finished. I find this happening quite a lot and it drives me nuts." She was already busy enough with her own projects and this unnecessary extra work brought great frustration at this point in her life.

Laura, though she still had problems with scheduling meeting times, had a more positive experience with the cooperation of the group and wrote, "I can't emphasize enough, the relief and satisfaction I feel by being in the groups where people cooperate, share their ideas, and are willing to do their part" (October 19, 1989). Toni also wrote about her group projects: "It seems much of my 4th year is group work. At times it is frustrating setting times according to schedule" (October 12, 1989). Sue, her journal partner concurred with this. "I know what you mean" she responded in the journal.

These examples illustrate just how much extra hidden stress was caused by the group projects. Although group projects have some value in terms of learning about group dynamics, it is necessary, if possible, for the instructors to take into account the overall work loads and time constraints of members of the group.

Journals. As well as group assignments, journals were required in several other courses, and this took up a great deal of the student teachers' time. In one of our group conversations, we were discussing the way that journals are being used in more courses all the time. Diane commented, "we were doing journals for everybody... I think the whole university has gone

journal crazy" (April 2, 1990). These individuals were interested and keen to write journals, yet this overabundance of their use was spoiling the true nature and meaning of journal writing for them. Liz was quite right when she said, "The idea is to be reflective, and if you are being forced, are you being true to what you are saying?" (April 2, 1990). The uses and efficacy of journal writing will be discussed in Chapter VII, but certainly their high use contributed to the general stress level of the student teachers.

Personal stress. Along with the pressures of their workload, Diane and Liz each had personal circumstances which added to their overall stress. Diane was sharing her home computer with her university age daughter and this required coordination and cooperation as she was not always able to use it when her needs arose. Diane was an organized person who always liked to be prepared and tried to do her work early, whereas her daughter was not always quite so punctual.

Liz, on the other hand, was concerned about how to keep up her self-imposed high standards. She had been achieving good marks and wanted to continue to do so. With the amount of work that she had to accomplish, she doubted her ability to continue to excel, and this was causing her extreme stress. On November 2, 1989 she wrote in her journal:

> What seems to be the real problem is not so much competing against my peers alone, but myself as well. As hard as I try (and lord knows I do) I can't measure up to my past performances -- actually not performances as I've learnt so much, but more my marks/grades. It's really maddening, and what's worse is I know I shouldn't let it bother me as I am definitely learning but

when I have to start considering my career search I realize how vital grades are.

The pressure that the student teachers endured caused them much stress and they certainly used their journals to relieve this. As Diane reflected in a summary which she wrote towards the conclusion of this study:

> For myself this journal has been very much of a personal diary for venting my stress. It certainly has helped me get things "off my chest" and saved Larry [her husband] having to listen to me rant and rave. For this alone it has been invaluable. (March 29, 1990)

The journals in Term 1 were largely cathartic in the way that they were used to relieve stress, and later in the term, when several groups presented workshops about various aspects of play, there were other ways in which the pressure was released.

The Relief of Play

It was during the group presentations of the play workshops (referred to earlier), that the students all began to relax somewhat. The workshop which seemed to have the most therapeutic effect on the students was the one on natural materials which incorporated play with mud and water. Diane and Liz were both delighted with the mud:

> I loved the mud centre. I need all the therapy I can get! Mud just appeals to the senses--you want to get in there with your hands

> and feet and feel the squishy squashy goop between your toes. (I liked puddles when I was small.) The water table was fun as well--just what was needed on a stressed out morning. (Diane, October 19, 1990)

and:

> Wow! What a great class. I can only hope our workshop is equally enjoyable and informative.... I was particularly thrilled with the mud element. I had forgotten what fun mud is to play in. What a wonderful sensation! It felt great - icky, gooey, sloppy ... and fun! ....There is something internally satisfying in sloshing around in usually forbidden material. (Liz, October 19, 1989)

It was interesting that the mud and water workshop had the strongest and most profound effect on both Diane and Liz. Laura, Sue, and Toni also mentioned in their journals how much they had enjoyed it. Even though the other workshops were equally as well presented and full of content and ideas, it was the sensual effects of these natural elements which seemed to affect the students. Perhaps it was partly, as Diane suggested, a return to childhood memories; perhaps it was partly, as is generally accepted, the soothing and relaxing effect of water. Whatever it was that ultimately caused the healing effects of the workshops, there were definite positive effects for the student teachers who were experiencing so much stress.

Learning Through Play

As well as therapy sessions, the workshops also had other benefits, especially for Liz. She related in her journal the feeling that she had experienced during a "Make Believe" play workshop:

> By comparing the fun play to learning we were again made aware of their uniform existence. And even tho' we just did a rationale on play as learning this activity was equally reinforcing. It truly didn't dawn on me, as I was painting my U.F.O spacecraft/planet, that I was also learning. I actually had to laugh a little as in my rationale I explained to the parents [in an assignment] that most often learning occurs without the child ever being aware of it, but as a trained professional I would be able to recognize it, and here I was completely unaware of my own learning. (October 27, 1989)

As the instructor responded to this entry, "Now you <u>really</u> understand -- you must experience in order to develop 'real' understanding" (October 27, 1989).

There was a palpable feeling of relief from all five student teachers, late in Term 1, as workshops were presented and assignments were completed.

Relief and Refreshment

Liz had only written a few times in her journal about the ongoing stress, which had nevertheless been a part of her life throughout the term. On November 29, 1989 she wrote the following:

> Boy, do I feel good! Having been stressed out to the point of depression the last few weeks, I gave myself a little therapy. Sat. morning I got in my car with my girlfriend down from Australia and we left for Banff. I put all my books and assignments and application forms down, grabbed some mitts and boots and left. And am I ever glad I did! A trip to those magnificent mountains has a way of soothing me. In the presence of those powerful awe inspiring miracles, I was better able to put my life and "problems" into perspective. Around towering mountains, my concerns never seem as large as I believe them to be. So I took an objective step backwards and looked at my situation - regardless of how I do on my papers, whether I get straight eights, whether I find a job immediately I will survive. And I can again now see just how lucky I am to have been given the blessing of a wonderful life with caring friends and families in an incredible country .... Feeling this way I feel like a huge burden has been lifted off my shoulders. I feel refreshed again. I've got my life in perspective again and can attack the challenge of finals with a new attitude.

This said it all -- at least for Liz. Diane was anticipating a trip to San Francisco during the Christmas holidays and the thought of this was keeping her going throughout the term. She mentioned it in her journals, almost as if it were a lifeline: "My husband says to just keep thinking of San Francisco only 7 weeks away and that is what is keeping me going now" (November 9, 1989). Diane also got strength from sharing her journal with Laura. She mentioned more than once how much she appreciated Laura's clear thinking

and encouraging remarks. Sue and Toni, also, wrote regularly and thoughtfully to each other in their journals and gave mutual reassurance in their responses.

Summary

The themes which emerge from the practicum journals are surprisingly similar from one student teacher to another. Laura, Sue, and Toni also wrote about many of the same issues as Diane and Liz: classroom management, fatigue, supervisory relationships, and so forth. The explicit discoveries that were uncovered in the dialogue journals from practicum were often to do with provision for program and classroom management. The problem of survival was paramount at the beginning of practicum, when energy was being expended to learn all about classroom routines, to stay ahead with planning and facilitating play, and also to deal with the daily stress of classroom life. Thus much of the journal writing, as demonstrated in the earlier part of this chapter, is to do with organization, planning, and other classroom issues such as flexibility of program, and dealing with physical and emotional stress.

It is important for student teachers to have a good working relationship with their cooperating teachers and faculty consultants, otherwise there will be frustration and practicum will not be a positive learning experience. At that time in their preservice education, the student teachers were thinking frequently of their future careers and of the classrooms which will eventually be theirs. Their thoughts constantly fluctuated between how to handle the various components of classroom life and whether or not they would have enough ideas to interest and challenge the children. They were also very

concerned about how they would handle their first year in their own classrooms.

In addition to the practical business of running a classroom, there were other issues emerging from the journals, which included the writers' comments on the importance of practicum for themselves, and its organization within the university structure of the teacher education continuum. These issues will be discussed in the following chapter.

The latter section of this chapter dealt with themes which emerged once the student teachers returned to the university classroom. They had an exceptionally heavy workload and the stress of organizing assignments and keeping up with deadlines emerged early in the term. To a large extent, the journals were used as a catharsis in order to deal with the pressure, though this was hampered somewhat by having journals to write in other courses. The student teachers believed that writing several journals detracted from the true meaning of reflection and it tended to become forced and not quite as sincere.

Another issue which added to the stress of this term's classes was that of having several group projects. Each writer specified that the major problems were related to the unequal effort by participants in the group, and the difficulties of scheduling meetings into already heavy timetables.

Relief, however, was very evident at certain times during the term especially when assignments were completed. The play workshops were particularly effective, as not only did they represent a completed assignment for the groups which were presenting, but they also allowed the whole class to become involved, to play, and to release their stress in so doing. The unequivocal favorite workshop was the one with water, mud, and sand, with mud being the most therapeutic element. Though stress was the main topic

about which the student teachers wrote in their journals during this term, discoveries were still emerging through the writing: Liz described her discovery of how play does indeed foster learning, and she realized this as she, herself, was immersed in one of the play centres. She was then able to relate her discovery to her practicum classroom.

The themes which emerged in the journals were common from one student teacher to another, but the type of writing differed from practicum journal to university classroom journal. In Chapter VI, I will discuss the connections which are made between practice and theory both during practicum and after the student teachers return to the university classroom.

CHAPTER VII

PERCEPTIONS AND CONNECTIONS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRACTICUM

Introduction

More than twenty years ago Yee (1969) wrote: "teacher education, critics, psychologists, state officials, and students agree that student teaching is the most significant aspect of teacher preparation" (p.327). In this chapter I will examine the current validity of this statement, and whether it still stands today as it was written in 1969. In so doing I will examine the relationships within the practicum triad: those of the student teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the faculty consultant. I will consider the student teachers' perceptions of practicum as written in their journals and according to tape recorded conversations. This will involve examining the connections which they made between practice and theory as it affected their beliefs about early childhood education. I will also consider other issues such as the timing of practicum and the reality of the practicum classroom as it differs from expectations built during university classes.

According to current research, the significance of practicum is still generally accepted. Moorehead, Lyman, and Waters (1988) term practicum the "capstone" experience, and Ross (1988) writes that "field experiences are considered the most significant events in the preservice teacher's

professional preparation" (p. 107). According to Richardson-Koehler (1988), "teachers overwhelmingly remember student teaching as being the most influential aspect of their program" (p. 28), and Joyce (1988) mentions experienced teachers who talk about the "critical influence" of the practice teaching experience.

There are, however, some important variables within each placement, and an individual student's success and comfort depends upon the ability to deal with these issues. Lanier and Little (in Zahorik, 1988), and Zeichner and Tabachnik (1981) believe that the effectiveness of practicum depends upon the relationship between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher, together (but to a lesser extent) with the faculty consultant. The five student teacher informants concurred with this view, and agreed that their cooperating teachers and faculty consultants played a critical role for them in their practicum experience.

Relationships with Supervisors

Cooperating Teachers

Diane and Liz both wrote in their journals about the positive influence of their cooperating teachers and how fortunate they were that they were both helpful and compatible. The student teachers often picked up tips and ideas from them and noted them for future reference. Diane wrote:

> There are always so many things to be thinking ahead about when you are dealing with young children. Mrs. M. [cooperating teacher] remembered to take a wad of kleenex

with her to the outside activities, and she had an extra granola bar put aside for an extra treat and was able to use it when we were short one snack. I hope some of these things are absorbed with more experience! (February 22, 1989)

Two weeks later she noted, "I felt I had better control today and used the various techniques that Mrs. M. suggested yesterday" (March 8, 1989). She frequently wrote about new ideas and strategies that she was learning from the modeling of her cooperating teacher and when practicum was almost over she still felt the same: "Mrs. M. is definitely a wonderful role model for a teacher and I have been extremely fortunate" (Diane, April 10, 1989).

Liz felt the same way and on her very first day in the classroom, she gave a glowing testimonial of how the positive classroom atmosphere, which she felt was created by her cooperating teacher, helped her to overcome her nervousness:

I think it is safe to presume that the genuine welcoming and openness I felt rooted from the wonderful personality of my cooperating teacher, Mrs. S.. The minute I met her I knew this experience would be a great and rewarding one. She radiates caring; she glows love. She's the kind of person people immediately feel comfortable with and trust. Without a word she can make the person she's with feel special. Her relaxed calm attitude makes people feel cozy and warm....Parents and children alike are drawn to her and touched by her efforts. (February 20, 1989)

She continued to regard Mrs. S. as a positive role model when later she pondered a problem she had in the classroom: "I'll ask Mrs. S. about it and see if she thinks I should be concerned" (March 6, 1989). Mrs. S. was also very generous with resources. As Liz noted, "Working with Mrs. S. I've been able to gather a lot of evaluation material" (April 3, 1989). Liz knew that she would be able to use this in the future.

Because their cooperating teachers were so accepting and open, the practica for Diane and Liz were wonderful resource-collecting opportunities where they could gather together materials and ideas which they would be able to take with them into their own classrooms. Liz once spent a whole day, while her cooperating teacher was out at an inservice session, going through some files: "Here I thought it would be a nice relaxed kinda day -- was I mistaken!" (February 22, 1989). She had planned to spend a short while on this task and she wrote, "I looked up at the clock and was shocked to see most of the day flew [sic] by" (February 22, 1989). She was, however, very pleased to have access to these files and to have had some time to peruse them. Conversely the cooperating teachers, particularly Diane's, were grateful for any new hints which the student teachers brought out and shared with them.

For Diane and Liz, the cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship was strong and positive and followed the model of Hoover, O'Shea and Carroll (1988) who suggest:

> [cooperating] teachers and university supervisors operate to provide a satisfying experience for the intern, rather than to promote a carefully articulated set of instructional standards. (p. 23)

A further paper, on effective conferencing, by the same three authors, states that "all members of the supervision triad need to exhibit a respect for others; communicate in clear, concrete and non-judgmental terms; and encourage the active participation of one another in decision making and goal setting" (O'Shea, Hoover and Carroll, 1988, p.21). They need, they wrote, "a sense of collective participation" (p.21), which is just what was happening in the classrooms of Diane, Liz, and their respective cooperating teachers.

Frye (1988) talks of the need for "congruence between the skills taught in the teacher education program and in the skills demonstrated by the cooperating teacher" (p. 56). There are times when cooperating teachers will insist on certain practices in their classrooms which may be contrary to student teachers' learning and beliefs, and this can create tension between themselves and the student teacher. It is necessary, in this case, for student teachers to realize that, although the practicum classroom is a place where they can try out their ideas, they are nevertheless guests in the classroom and as such they must abide by the routines and techniques of the cooperating teacher. Diane and Liz were fortunate in that their cooperating teachers were open to their ideas and gave them freedom to experiment. The trust that was built between them led to the positive practicum experience for the two student teachers, and the collaborative nature of the placements.

Faculty Consultants

Because of the organization of the teacher education system, the faculty consultant and the cooperating teacher are called upon to evaluate

student teachers in the practicum. According to Hoover, O'Shea, and Carroll (1988), it is better for the faculty consultant and cooperating teacher to be in a coaching role rather than one that is purely evaluative. However, this is not usually possible and the evaluative role, unfortunately, often causes deviation from a coaching role for faculty consultants. Cooperating teachers and student teachers are working together most of the time in the classroom, during the weeks of practicum, so a feeling of closeness is easier to attain in this situation. This is not always so between faculty consultants and student teachers, and there could be several reasons for this. Firstly, if faculty consultants are viewed only in the light of evaluator by the student teacher, this might cause some stress upon their arrival in the classroom; secondly, the faculty consultant could be an expert at a different level of education than the class to which the student teacher is assigned and may teach by a different philosophy; thirdly, s/he only visits the classroom once a week at the most and so never gets to know the student well enough to build feelings of trust and closeness during such short and widely spaced out visits. However, if the supervisory conferences are effective, and time is spent reflecting together on the students' perceptions of the classroom, then a strong and positive rapport may well be achieved.

There are many times when the faculty consultant is not present and the student feels that s/he has done something well. The student teachers may feel disappointment that the occasion was missed by the supervisor. Diane often had problems with the timing of my supervisory visits as her faculty consultant. She felt that I consistently missed her best days even though we had always arranged the time of my visit in advance:

> A.M. came this afternoon, in the midst of all the commotion. However, I told her that we could not plan a special lesson [just] for her. We have had some really good lessons on other days, but usually the kids are hanging from the ceiling when she comes. (Diane, March 23, 1989)

Diane really wanted to share all of the exciting things that happened for her, and she reminded me of my absence:

> All in all it was a great day A.M., and you missed some very exciting events. It is too bad that you always seem to visit on one of the off days because most of the days are really great! (April 11, 1989)

I was (for the most part) grateful for Diane's detailed journal; not only was I able to get a good picture of what went on in her classroom, but I was gently chided for missing out on all the good things that happened there! During our supervisory conferences we were able to discuss her days in the kindergarten, although conference time often seemed too short for ideal supervisory visits. This is a problem for most faculty consultants, caused by the part-time nature of the position which is added to many other commitments and time constraints.

The issue of supervision and the related challenges for student teachers is one about which there is much discourse and effective models of field service are constantly being researched. Holly, 1989; MacKinnon, 1987; Nolan , 1989; and Schon, 1983 talk about a "hall of mirrors" that cooperating teachers and faculty consultants, as coaches, can help student teachers

create in order to think about their performance. "This coaching relationship is inherently collaborative" (p.35) says Nolan, who suggests that for many reasons the term "supervisor" carries "excess baggage and unfortunate connotations" (p. 40) and should be replaced with another term, though he is not sure what. Its imperfect organization adds to the many challenges that student teachers face along with the many other day to day decisions which go to make up the life of a teacher of young children.

As mentioned above, not all students are fortunate enough to have a faculty consultant who has the same level of teaching background as they do. Because of the unique early childhood philosophy of learning through play, it is important that the faculty consultants at least understand the concepts behind the methods that are used, whether or not they may personally agree with them. Laura, one of the secondary informants, had an unfortunate situation where her faculty consultant did not have appropriate expectations for her since he did not really understand the early childhood philosophy. As a result, Laura did not have a positive practicum experience, and she alludes to this in her practicum journal which she shared with me when she joined the study at the beginning of Term 1. She also mentioned her practicum problems in one of our taped conversations. Half way through the practicum Laura's faculty consultant had been in the classroom for the mid-point evaluation and she described how she had planned an activity with leprechauns for St. Patrick's day:

> I wanted to do this activity because we had been building towards this all week and I think it stimulates children's imagination, but I was worried about how I would bring them down enough to get anything done. This was the day of my

> mid-point evaluation by my faculty consultant and I hoped things wouldn't be too bad. Well, very little went right. The children had trouble putting their hands up to be heard and instead were shouting out (not really shouting, but speaking excitedly) at any time. Totally understandable as far as I was concerned but it made me look like I had no control. (March 17, 1989)

Laura was never able to mention her dilemma directly in her journal, and many times she wrote about incidents which concerned her but got no response from her faculty consultant. The only comment that was ever written by her faculty consultant in her journal was "Laura - I hope that this journal exercise is helpful to you. D." (March 1, 1989). This did not give Laura the support that she needed, and it took many months for her to rationalize and come to terms with the experience.

When Laura returned to the university classroom for her final year, she reflected back upon her practicum experience of five months prior to this time. She commented on her relationship with her cooperating teacher, and was able to see, in retrospect, where there could have been a more open communication. Of her faculty consultant she wrote:

> I was also a bit disappointed in my faculty consultant. I think he tried, but he had a few strikes against him to begin with. For instance, he was a former principal of a junior high school for 10 years (although he only looked about 35 years old) so had very little exposure, if any, to a kindergarten setting; he was always in a hurry; he only came 4 times, although he argues it

was 5 times; and he had a philosophy that no-one would get a 5. As a student, one is really at another's whim! (August 31, 1989)

Here Laura endeavoured to be objective and accepting of the situation with her faculty consultant, but she was justified in her concern that his report will be influential when she applies for a teaching position. The appointment of faculty consultants should be such that the relative levels of the faculty consultants' expertise and the student teachers' practicum classrooms are taken into account and carefully matched. If this happens, the practicum experience should be a positive and successful one, and circumstances such as Laura's would not arise. Too much time and hard work has been expended for such frustration to occur.

Theory *versus* Reality and the Beliefs of the Student Teachers

Often in their journal entries, the student teachers mentioned the reality of the classroom in practice as it differed from theory taught in the university classroom. Early in her practicum, Diane was reading a book to the children. She held her book one way (as she had been taught in a university class), and was told by the children that Mrs. M. [cooperating teacher] did not do it that way. Diane explained to the children that everyone had a different way of doing things and she explained, giving her reasons, that this was her way. Diane was able to accept this implied criticism from the children, and later asked her cooperating teacher's opinion about the incident. Fortunately, her cooperating teacher was in agreement with

whatever Diane was comfortable with, and so this did not develop into a big issue. However, that particular practice of the cooperating teacher in the practicum classroom was different from what she had been taught, and so Diane needed to confront the situation which the children had precipitated and decide upon how she would proceed for the remainder of her placement.

In another case, it was five days before Easter and Liz had some concerns about how she was disciplining the children, "Often I feel bad about having to stop and settle down their excited outbursts but it's important" (March 21, 1989). She had been quite tentative about discipline and wrote:

> If I lived by the textbooks, I would probably believe [that] my hushing them is detrimental to their creative growth etc.. But let's face it, not only do they have to learn respect and rules, [but if they don't] the class would be chaos -- and besides they seem to forget within minutes anyways. No one's feelings get deeply hurt. Discipline, as much as I wish it wasn't, is extremely necessary -- but if you are consistent I believe the children will react well to it and come to expect it almost. Unfortunately you do have to be tough with them -- but truly it's for their own good. And let's face it it's good for my own sanity too. (March 21, 1989)

Liz was learning that, as a teacher, she needed to make her own decisions according to the minute by minute changing dynamics of the classroom. On the day that the whole class had gone on a field trip, they discovered that it was the wrong day. She wrote, "Now I see why the profs emphasize being

flexible" (February 22, 1989). She had discovered that this is not something that is learned in the university classroom, nor could it be, due to the individuality of each group of children, in each classroom, in each school. "This just goes to show you," wrote Liz, "that textbooks aren't the gospel" (March 21, 1989).

A few weeks later, Liz was presenting a special day in the classroom and she was writing in her journal about how she was learning to evaluate on the spot what was happening in the classroom and to adapt and alter activities according to the needs of the children. From this information she could shape her plans and make changes for the next time. She wrote: "Again this obviously is something I would never have experienced in the textbooks or lecture halls at university" (April 11, 1989).

Later, back in the university classroom, the group were discussing the distinctions between work, play, and learning. Liz wrote in her journal:

> Work, Play, Learning -- Can one honestly distinguish between the three? Perhaps at one point in the past I naively saw distinct separating lines between them but those black and white definitions no longer exist. What in theory appeared unique, in practice became one. Before my practicum experience I accepted at face value all that the texts claimed, including the separate entities (work, play, learn). Now, however, I see it under a much different light. I've been exposed to reality beyond books; reality in which boundaries do not exist. What was black and white before, now is a fuzzy grey. (September 20, 1989)

During one of the group discussions between Diane, Liz, Laura, and myself, we were talking about the way that the kindergarten day was full of interruptions for such things as computer time, gym time, library time, and Diane made the following observation:

> This is the realistic world as compared to what you are taking in the [university] classroom, that your centre time is never going to be an hour and a half long, because you have computers for fifteen minutes, and the library for another fifteen minutes and the kids are running here and running there. (April 2, 1990)

Liz replied: "You see, you guys would have known that. I didn't know about these realities until practicum" (April 2, 1990). Laura agreed. "Yes, I already knew all that," she said, and Diane proceeded to reassure Liz, "so that you know that -- that this is all a dream you see -- well, we already knew that this was not reality" (April 2, 1990).

I continued with this thought and asked the three student teachers if the practicum had had any effect on their thinking, "Do you find you have a different approach to the courses once you have had your practicum?" (Mills, April 2, 1990). Liz felt that it definitely did have an effect on her, Diane always had approached her courses with the thought that some content would be of use and some would not, and Laura was not sure that she considered her courses any differently after practicum. I wondered if this was because she had had a negative practicum experience, but Liz pointed out that she had friends who had not had good practicum

experiences and they used these negative things to learn what should and what should not be in a classroom. She explained:

> All of them can now see the reality of it, and so I think you can't distinguish between a good practicum and a bad practicum, but experience. Because this was my first real experience. They've had the real experience [before]. So they've learned from their real experience before -- and I just took it from practicum. (April 2, 1990)

Laura began to think aloud about the eight years that she had spent in the classroom as an aide, and as she said:

> I was always wondering when it was going to help me in my course work, and it never really did -- except when we had to do the environmental project and ... our domestic play project then -- yes, this is like the classroom and setting up ... and it was -- the practical stuff. (April 2, 1990)

It was interesting to note that Diane, who had taught playschool for a number of years, chose what would be of use to her in the classroom from the course content, as did Toni who had worked in a day care for many years. She told me, "A lot you learn in university you take ... and modify for your classroom" (April 21, 1990). Toni also commented that many of her university classes were somewhat idealistic. "In second year you believe whatever they are teaching," she told me, "but after you do your practicum, you realize that it doesn't all work" (April 21, 1990). She talked of all the

"neat and wonderful" things that the class was taught to do with children, but then proceeded to describe how difficult this can be with the reality of thirty children in a classroom. Some of her Curriculum and Instruction classes were "useless", but others were really good. She liked the ones which were based on child-centred philosophy, and mentioned particularly her language classes as being very useful. She was also happy that she had taken Early Childhood Education as she was now aware of how to organize centres in a classroom, and this approach could be used for older children if she should find herself in a higher grade classroom.

Laura, who had been an aide, had not really thought in this way during her courses, and Liz, who had little prior classroom experience, did not know about what they called the "real world" before her practicum, but was certainly applying what she had learned in practicum when she returned to the classroom.

Throughout their journals, the student teachers scattered comments about their beliefs, such as Laura's "leprechaun" incident, and Liz's feelings about discipline, as well as the group's realization about the realities of the timing in a kindergarten day.

Liz wrote about her belief in the strength of a positive self-image for children. She was reminded about this from incidents in her childhood which caused her occasional low self-concept, which was still prone to return in low moments. She determined that she would always remember to boost her pupils' self-image and try to "provide a cushion against the many blows that a child will undoubtedly encounter" (October 7, 1989). One of Diane's main beliefs is to see children enjoying school, and some of her other comments refer to communication in the school:

I know now that I have done a full practicum that many of the ideas I have may or may not work depending on the school you are in. Some schools are very open and receptive to new ideas and some are not--diplomacy and tact are key necessities in dealing with other staff. (Diane, November 16, 1989)

Timing of Practicum

Both Diane and Liz had strong feelings about the timing of practice teaching within the continuum of teacher education. That it varies and changes from time to time in education programs demonstrates that universities themselves are unsure of the optimum timing for practicum.

Liz remarked in her journals that she was glad that she was able to return in her fourth year and take courses in areas in which she had discovered she was deficient:

> Next year I certainly do plan on taking courses that before my practicums I would never have considered. This way I can find my weaknesses, acknowledge them and work to improve them next year. I certainly would suggest a third year practicum for all those in the faculty -- how else will you learn what you need to improve on if not thru' experience? (March 13, 1989)

Diane, on the other hand, really felt the need to make personal contacts while she was in her placement. She was a little concerned about the job market and felt that since jobs are often offered as a result of a field placement, it would have been an advantage to be available to fill a position

the September following her placement. During her practicum she wrote: "It is going to be hard to get back to studies again after being in the classroom. I wish the practicum could be held in the fourth year because of the contacts made in the school" (March 3, 1989).

In a later entry she mentioned this again and used the same reasoning, but tempered her comment with, "However, I guess it was changed to the third year because many students find they are in the wrong profession when they finally get to a classroom" (April 3, 1989). Just a week later, the same issue resurfaced when Diane was reflecting upon her reasons for writing less than usual in her daily practicum journal entries:

> I thought about it today and I think the real reason that I have not been writing as much is that I am beginning to feel a real part of the scene and I am not questioning and observing as much--I am doing more....I really do feel that somehow the practicum should be arranged in the fourth year. Why couldn't the Play C.I. [Curriculum and Instruction] be in the Third Year (possibly an extension of 303)? The contacts made in this year are invaluable toward finding a job if one was coming up for September, but it is difficult to say what will be available two years down the road. (April 11, 1989)

Diane was still feeling this way when we had one of our final meetings a year later and she, Liz, Laura, and I were discussing the problem. Liz and Diane still held to their original, yet differing, opinions about the timing of practicum, although Liz's intention to change her enrollment into certain

courses that she felt she needed (as a result of practicum) had not worked out too well for her. Entry into some of the courses was limited to students in specific minor program routes, which meant that she was unable to register. However, she was able to make some of her desired changes and was happy with those. Also, knowing where she needed more information, she could direct her studies accordingly since there were a couple of opportunitites for independent study in the two early childhood courses.

Laura's opinion about practicum was that the best way to practice the art of teaching was by internship. She felt that the most effective way to apply theory and knowledge was in a classroom, over an extended period of time, with an experienced expert. Further it is only through being in a classroom every day that one learns how to be an effective teacher, she thought. It was interesting to note that when she mentioned her eight years as an aide in a classroom, she said "maybe [during] that eight years I learned more than I realized I had, because I have been saying to myself all along, 'gee, I wonder when this eight years is going to click in?' " (April 2, 1990). After some further discussion, the student teachers suggested that being assigned to one certain classroom for a whole year might be useful. They felt that if they could spend one morning a week in a classroom, this would enable them to see these children in a continuum and it should expose them to experiences that they presently cover in the visits as they are presently scheduled. The other members of the group returned to Laura's prior experiences and commented that being in the classroom day in and day out should surely have had an effect for her. Laura replied, "Well maybe it has and I haven't been able to recognize that" (April 2, 1990). She went on to talk about some of the things that she had learned, such as time

management, which led to the discussion about the realities *versus* the theory of the kindergarten classroom as it was discussed above.

Summary

This chapter was concerned with the significance of practicum as perceived by the student teachers. Though field service is continually being researched and is generally accepted as an influential part of teacher preparation, skilful supervision is vital so that the student teacher will gain optimum learning from the experience in the school classroom. In order to work towards this goal, it is necessary for the practicum triad of student teacher, cooperating teacher and faculty consultant to practice extensive collaboration and communication. Hoover, O'Shea, and Carroll (1988) write of the necessity for the development of positive relationships within the triad. They mention "three interactive dimensions that appear to be critical to the quality of communication within the supervision triad: a) collective participation, b) helping attitudes, and c) supervisory style" (p. 24).

Diane and Liz both experienced positive relationships within the practicum triad and their journals clearly reflect their perceptions in this regard. Diane wrote several times of exciting and special events which happened in her classroom which I, as her faculty consultant, missed due to conflicting schedules. This was frustrating for Diane, but she was at least able to write about the activities in her journal and we talked about them during our supervisory conferences.

Laura had a less than positive experience in her practicum due to her faculty consultant teaching at a different level and not seeming to understand the concepts of early childhood education. It took her several

months to come to terms with this experience and she wrote, "more and more, I feel like I had a less than optimal student teaching experience. As I listen to others talk of things that occurred in their rounds, I feel almost cheated" (October 19, 1989). She listed a number of things which concerned her about her cooperating teacher and her faculty consultant including differences between the evaluating philosophy of her consultant and that of other consultants (he never gave a mark of 5, when others did) and concluded by writing:

> I really feel like we get shafted sometimes by someone's personal quirks, (I guess inconsistencies would be a more apt term) and then a school board looks at these results and makes a judgement based on what it sees. There are some definite cracks in the system. (October 19, 1989)

Though Laura had no alternative but to accept the sitution, it did not make it any easier for her to understand.

The student teachers wrote in their journals of the differences between theory and reality. Diane, who had taught before, was more aware, as she went into her practicum, of what she called the "real life" of teaching; Liz, on the other hand, soon realized that only experience with children in a classroom would make some aspects of teaching become clear for her. Her discoveries in this regard were a regular part of her journal writing, and emerged frequently.

They all had opinions as to the timing of practicum, and often this resulted from their previous experiences in the field. Each idea was valid, and this was corroborated in current research, in which different models of

teacher preparation, especially the student teaching module, are being worked with. The very fact that the timing and placement of practicum in the continuum of teacher preparation is often changed is evidence that the perfect model has not yet been discovered.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JOURNEY: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

Introduction

This study has been a true journey. Not only have I followed the pathways of learning for Diane, Liz, Laura, Sue, and Toni, but at the same time I have also been travelling along my own road of discovery. It began several years ago when I enrolled in an undergraduate course in order to update my educational qualifications. My journey resumed two years ago when I enrolled in my first post graduate course at the University of Alberta, and realized that I desired to continue to learn. I embarked on this, my current expedition, two years ago in a graduate research class. We were required to write personal journals which were shared with the professor, and we were also to select an area of study which would be researched for a term paper. I chose to study journals in that class; and thus began my fascination with the power and value of journal writing.

My parallel interest is in the professional preparation of early childhood teachers. Having worked with young children for many years, I had the opportunity to become involved in teacher education, and in particular, the field service aspect of their preparation. As I shared journals with these students of young children, I began to realize that I could help them to think

more deeply and more reflectively about their teaching as a result of my own experiences. Thus began the journey which led to this study.

Thoughts and Discoveries Along the Road

For over a year I have travelled alongside my student informants, and our journeys have constantly overlapped along the way. As they were learning, so was I. Many times as I was reading their journals, I felt moved to pick up the phone and ask, "Do you remember when you wrote ...?", and to remind them in the midst of their toil and stress of those times when they wrote with intensity and idealism about their chosen profession. We have all been living very busy lives, close yet separate, but I feel that I know these individuals intimately. I was privileged to glimpse into their most private thoughts as we travelled along our road of learning together, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have been allowed to share such insights.

Discoveries in Practicum Journals

As I re-read through the journals of Diane and Liz, I was amazed by the similarity of the themes and discoveries which emerged throughout the writing of each person. As they wrote, their stories of practicum unfolded, and, though they were in quite different placements and are quite different individuals, each told a similar tale.

At the beginning of practicum, they were striving to survive. In the first days they described what happened in the classroom, and of the energy they expended as they learned about their young pupils and settled into the routines of their kindergarten placements. As they became comfortable in their schools

and took on more responsibilities in the classroom, they moved towards writing about how they dealt with different areas of classroom management and the myriad of decisions which they began to make daily in their work with youngsters. They experienced the stress of fluctuating energy levels which was closely tied to children's behaviour; or perhaps it was that the children's behaviour was connected to their fluctuating energy levels. They wrote about the children they were teaching, and how they were providing for learning in their play-based classrooms. The journals of Diane and Liz were true dialogues. They asked questions of their cooperating teachers and they asked questions of me, their faculty consultant; and we carried on running conversations in the journals throughout the weeks of practicum.

Fortunately both Diane and Liz had good relationships with their cooperating teachers, who were open and generous in the way that they shared their knowledge and resources. In order to have a beneficial learning experience in a practicum placement, it is essential for the practicum triad of student teacher, cooperating teacher, and faculty consultant to have a cooperative, collegial relationship. Diane and Liz wrote of their cooperating teachers with respect and warmth, and throughout their practicum, they commented about how much they learned from these people, who coached them through those weeks in the classroom.

Practicum is a stressful time, and Diane and Liz experienced alternating highs and lows related to physical fatigue and emotional strain. They also reflected deeply about their choice of career -- and they needed reassurance from their journal partners that they would cope, and that they had chosen the right path. By writing about these worries in their journals, they were able to alleviate their concerns somewhat, and also to receive the

reassurance of their supervisors that they were developing into competent and caring professionals.

Journals from the University Classroom

When Diane and Liz returned to the university classroom they were joined in the study by three more student teachers, Laura, Sue, and Toni. Laura was Diane's journal partner, and Sue and Toni were other members of the early childhood class who had volunteered to share their journals in order to lend scope to the study. Liz chose not to share her journals with a student colleague, and so continued to write alone but for myself and the university instructors.

The journals that were written in the university classroom did not contain such explicit discoveries as the practicum journals, though their beliefs often entered implicitly into their writing as they made connections between their practice and the theory they were now learning . The terms became so busy that the student teachers were under stress and much of their writing was concerned with coping with this pressure. As well as the heavy work loads which the student teachers were experiencing, there were other factors which added to their difficulties. For several of their assignments they were required to work with groups of other people, and the group participants were not selected according to compatibility of timetables. Consequently there were extreme scheduling problems, which added to the hours of each person's already long days. As well as the group work, another aspect which caused stress was the reqirement to write journals in several concurrent courses. Though these student teachers and I believed in the value and power of journal writing, if journal writing requirements are excessive, the outcome is

trivialized and student teachers begin to write indiscriminately. They tend to write for the sake of writing, so that the journal loses its power, and instead becomes a task rather than a learning process.

One thing that the journals provided for the students, though, was an outlet to write about their stress. They consistently shared their feelings about all aspects of university life during this time, and thus the journals provided a catharsis for them. As Diane said, it prevented her husband from having to listen to her, and in writing about her frustrations, she saved him from the extra pressure.

Relief came about for the student teachers in the form of completed assignments, and also in participating in the play workshops which were presented in Term 1. The favourite medium for each student was mud, and each one wrote about how the mud play created a release and relaxed them as they played.

The Significance of Practicum

The student teachers wrote often about their personal perceptions of the significance of teaching and practicum as it related to their classroom learning. They felt that there were differences between the theory that they were being taught, and the reality of the classrooms in which they were practicing. Smyth (1989) states that, "because teachers interact with the world around them and make sense of it, adapt and refocus what they do, we can no longer defend defined teaching solely in terms of competence in prescribed skills, pedagogical or otherwise" (p. 167). The debate about the applicability of some university courses was ongoing, and it was one which was heard many

times and at all stages of teacher preparation. The early childhood minor begins in the second year, unlike other minors which begin in the fourth year, and thus the students were spending a good part of their final year picking up various first and second year courses that they needed in order to complete graduation requirements. This was frustrating for them, as they felt that there were many other, more valuable and appropriate ways in which they might have been spending their time. Likewise there are many things that are not learned until the student teacher goes into a classroom and teaches "real" children. This issue was discussed in journals around the time that the students were presenting their workshops. In Term 1 they provided play workshops for fellow students, and in Term 2 they did workshops with children who were invited into the classroom. This created debate about working with adults rather than with children. When they raised the issue of presenting workshops and classes for peers, the instructor reminded the students that it is necessary to experience, ourselves, many of the things that we present to children. Eventually, they realized that there are benefits to both methods. Not only did participation in the workshops act as a real stress releaser for the students, (and this was certainly borne out in the reactions to the play with mud mentioned in Chapter 5), but they also gained some useful insights about methods to present play centres to children, gained from their own reactions when they were overwhelmed with several new centres all at once. When, in the Term 2 Early Childhood Class, the group taught "real" children in a laboratory setting, they were able to put these personal experiences into practice with a deeper understanding.

Because Diane, Laura, and Toni had previously spent some time in classrooms, they felt that certain theories would not work in practice, and they wrote in their journals and talked in our interviews of how they made choices

in their courses about what content may be useful or not for their future classrooms. Liz, however, had not had this prior experience, so she was learning, and making connections throughout her journals between her practice and the theory that she was learning.

The student teachers also had opinions about the timing of practicum in the continuum of teacher preparation. Diane wished to see it in the fourth year, in order to make contacts for future employment, and Liz felt that it was best in the third year, so that she could use her fourth year to enroll in courses in which she felt deficient. Because of the continuous changes in the nature of teaching, the sequence of theory and practice is an area about which there is constant research, so the ideal order is continually being rethought -- and perhaps it will never remain static. Just as education continually changes and evolves, so does the sequence of teacher preparation. But the opinions stated in the writing of the student teachers indicate that theory should alternate with practice, and in this way each phase will benefit from the other along the continuum.

Journal Writing in the Classroom

In reading, sharing, and analysing the journals of these student teachers, I have watched them explore, discover, come to understand, and most importantly question themselves about their chosen profession. That much of this has been accomplished through their dialogue journals bears testimonial to the power of writing for these people.

Diane, Liz, Laura, Sue, and Toni used their journals as what Holly (1989) calls "a working document" (p. 20). In each phase, they wrote descriptions of events in the practicum and university classrooms; later, as the

type of writing changed from descriptive to interpretive, they began to evolve for themselves a personal understanding of the meaning of their teaching.

In the second phase of the study, the words "working document" took on a slightly different meaning for the journals. The student teachers still commented about their personal understandings and discoveries within their studies, but due to being under extreme pressure of workload at this time, they used the journals in a cathartic manner. That is, by writing about the stress that they were experiencing, they were able to relieve some of the tension. Thus the journals in phase 2 of the study worked for these writers in a different way.

Part of the stress for the student teachers, in Terms 1 and 2, was that they were required to write journals in several of their university courses. This created tremendous pressure, and they wrote about it often. The problem for them, apart from having more than one journal to write, was that the journals in other courses were used in a much different way from the reflective dialogues which they were writing in the early childhood courses. These other journals were more a summary of their classes, and the topics tended to be instructor-generated, and thus not particularly subjective or interesting to the students. Also the journals were evaluated according to content, and so it was little wonder that the student teachers soon began to write what they knew the instructor wished to read. This removed much of the spontaneity and enthusiasm of these writers and created instead a document with little personal meaning.

There are many applications for journals in the educational world; these include learning logs, counselling aids, communication documents and so forth. In order for journal writing to be beneficial, there are issues which must be faced by the instructors or teachers and their students. As these

issues are resolved, guidelines for the use of journal writing in the classroom will evolve. Thus there are several generally accepted methods of introducing journals in the classroom (Mitchell and Cheverie, 1989; Strackbein and Tillman, 1987; Kintisch, 1986; Hipple, 1985). Whether the writers are kindergarten students or university students, the guidelines are similar at all levels.

When introducing journals in the classroom, instructors and teachers, together with their students, should make decisions in the following areas: topic, whether it is assigned by the teacher or chosen by the student; format, how much, how little and how often to write; coercion, whether journals should be compulsory or voluntary; logistics, how to organize journal circulation so that the instructor (and journal partner) may respond regularly to the writing; private versus public writing, whether to allow the total confidentiality of private writing or a dialogue which will encourage more reflection; evaluation, which leads to a loss of spontaneity yet is a requirement for credit; ethics, to ensure that the writing is ethical, and appropriate if it is being shared with another.

Implications For Teacher Educators

Practicum Supervision and Placement

The roles of cooperating teacher and faculty consultant have been likened to those of a coach, and according to Nolan (1989) "this coaching relationship is inherently collaborative" (p. 35). In order to reach a high level of collaboration, Hoover, O'Shea, and Carroll (1988) write of the necessity for the development of positive relationships within the triad, and they mention

"three interactive dimensions that appear to be critical to the quality of communication within the supervision triad: a) collective participation, b) helping attitudes and skills, and c) supervisory style" (p. 24). O'Shea, Hoover, and Carroll (1988), in a paper on effective conferencing, state that "all members of the supervision triad need to exhibit a respect for others; communicate in clear, concrete and non-judgemental terms; and encourage the active participation of one another in decision making and goal setting." (p. 21). What the triad needs, they say, is a "sense of collective participation" (p.21).

There are several ways in which the above goals might be attained:

•Student teachers should be matched with cooperating teachers and faculty consultants who both possess a similar educational philosophy to that of the department which the student teacher attends, and thus, presumably to that of the student teacher. Unfortunately, this is often difficult, due to the numbers of placement classrooms that are continually required in a community containing an educational institution. However, collaboration between university and school, which is being forced more and more by economics, is turning out to be best for both students and school classrooms in order to best address their mutual needs.

•Cooperating teachers and faculty consultants should be skilled in encouraging student teachers to be reflective about their teaching, and in order to do this they should be appropriately prepared. It is time-consuming and costly to educate all of the cooperating teachers and faculty consultants to an appropriate level of competence when these positions are mostly part-time and impermanent. While a short workshop (which is the usual extent of supervisory training) is adequate, frequent practice and consistent use of supervisory skills is advisable.

Assuming that the supervision of student teachers is adequate, and that student teachers are placed in classrooms appropriate to their needs, there is a necessity for continuity of experience and learning for both the return to the university classroom and future practicum placements. While student teachers must take responsibility for their own learning, if practicum supervisors had the opportunity to make recommendations for their students' further study (or practicum placement), then appropriate continuity of the preparation process would be assured. Appointment of a stable core of personnel, familiar with their students' needs, would create the continuity of program desirable for the appropriate professional preparation of teachers.

Evaluation

The main role of the cooperating teacher and the faculty consultant, in the eyes of the student teacher, is that of evaluation. Given the vast changes in the nature of education and schools over the last several years, more sophisticated supervision strategies are needed for today's student teachers. The traditional methods of assessment are no longer appropriate, and preservice teachers should take more of an active role in reflecting on their own learning and performance.

By being aware of their student teachers' needs, practicum supervisors demonstrate that they are "sensitive and responsive to the individual differences of the [student teacher]" (O'Shea, Hoover, and Carroll, 1988, p. 20). In so doing, cooperating teachers and faculty consultants may work together to lessen what Fields (1988) calls the "sting of evaluation" (p. 47) for the student teacher. Laura's experience demonstrated how a faculty consultant from a higher classroom teaching level had inappropriate expectations for her in the

early childhood classroom. If cooperating teachers and faculty consultants work closely with them, student teachers have a power of their own, and with guidance, can be "architects of their ideal model of learning" (Ross, 1988, p. 105). Thus student teachers, with the help of their supervisors, will become aware and reflective about their learning and they will be able to work together towards excellence in their chosen profession.

Sequence of Learning

In order to make sense of the theoretical aspect of their study, student teachers need to place it into a context. Thus in addition to university classroom instruction, they need an opportunity to put theory into practice in a real classroom with real children. This study has shown that student teachers make discoveries in the classroom and apply theory (or reject it) as they are teaching. It makes sense, therefore, to distribute theory and practice evenly throughout the teacher education continuum, so that firstly, the student teachers may practice their theory, and secondly, they may "experience the ongoing relationship between theory and practice" (Blakey and Everett-Turner, 1988, p. 11).

As to the timing of the sequences of theory and practice, if Liz were to choose, she would have her practicum in the third year, whereas Diane would select the fourth year. They both have good reasons for their opinions, and either would be valid. However, if there were some opportunity for practice in each of the third and fourth years, this would address each of their concerns and also give time for appropriate connections to be made between theory and practice. Another alternative would be to have an ongoing placement in a

school classroom for, perhaps, one or two days a week for the whole of the third and fourth years. While this would provide continuity in that the student teachers would get to know their classes well, other benefits, such as having blocks of time in which to do extended activities with the children, would not be available.

There does not seem to be an ideal solution, especially in a large university which constantly needs practice classrooms in the community. However, if theory and practice are alternated, then student teachers have the chance to apply each to the other and are then able to "examine the relevancy of learning in the broadest sense" (Blakey and Everett-Turner, 1988, p. 11).

Implications for Journals in Teacher Education

Journals as a Research Tool

Journals are not frequently utilized as a primary research tool, more often they are used in conjunction with other methods of data collection such as interviews, observation, questionnaires, and so forth. However, journals can be a useful vehicle by which the researcher may discover the intimate thoughts and opinions of another, remembering at the same time that there are certain conditions which should be employed.

When journals are used over a period of time, there is a deepening of thought and understanding through continuing reflection and re-reading, together with dialogue with another person (or people). Regular interviews during the journalling process also encourage further reflection, stimulating recall and providing an opportunity for discourse. It is essential that dialogue, both written and oral, be a part of researching through journals.

When the student teachers in my study had several journals to write at once, they all mentioned that they began to write what they thought their instructors wished to hear. The danger, when researching through journals, is whether the informants will write to the researcher's agenda or to their own. This is why it is essential that researchers do not impose specific topics on journal writers so that the writing will proceed in their chosen direction.

It could be difficult to know whether journal writing is the truth as the writer sees it, or if it is something written to please the reader. However, if the researcher works to build trust and honesty throughout the process, together with allowing freedom for the writer, then there is a good chance of success. There is certainly a risk involved regarding the veracity and accuracy of the data, so it is necessary for the researcher to acknowledge that this could be a limitation of the study.

Use of Journals

Freedom. If journals are to be used in teacher education as vehicles by which student teachers explore and learn, perhaps the most important consideration, when introducing journals, is to allow freedom for the students to write in order to meet their needs. At the beginning, student teachers write mostly in a descriptive manner. As they proceed, the type of writing changes, their thoughts develop and evolve, and the writing becomes more introspective. As well as using journals to make connections between theory and practice, student teachers also use journals as stress releasers when the pressure builds. Discovery and learning, through the use of journals, is a process which moves through its own stages and if writers are given freedom to explore these stages, the journal can be a powerful tool in the classroom.

Response to journals. In order to assist student teachers to gain maximum benefit from their journals, response from another individual is important. If the partner poses careful questions and comments as a dialogue develops, this individual is able to encourage the writer to be thoughtful and to listen to his/her "underground stream of images and recollections" (Progoff, in Simpson, 1986, p. 16). Apart from the feeling that someone is interested in their ideas, and that they are not writing in a vacuum, student teachers are able to solve problems and receive answers to their questions through their journal partners. When the partner or supervisor, as in Laura's case, rarely or never responds, writing in the journal may not be a useful learning activity, though the process will fulfil other needs for the writer.

It is also important to have regular and quick responses. As Diane mentioned, when the classes in Term 2 were irregular because of laboratory times out of the classroom, she felt that the journals were disjointed. She sometimes asked questions, and by the time she received answers, they were irrelevant. Dialogue in journals, therefore, should be regular and consistent in order to be the most effective.

Misuse of Journals

Evaluation. If, as mentioned above, student teachers are given freedom in their journal writing, then journals should not be evaluated for grades. Grading in journals takes away the creativity and spontaneity of writing. If the journal is to fulfil the goal of assisting the student teacher to discover and learn, then when a mark is attached to this, freedom is lost and writers will work towards a grade rather than towards personal discovery in their writing.

If, for university requirements, a mark of some sort is required, then appointing a credit/non-credit value is sufficient, and this leaves the student teacher with freedom to write spontaneously.

Coordination of journals. The other major problem which emerged in both of the university terms was the requirement to write journals in other courses. This began to trivialize the writing, as the students just wrote so that there would be something on the page, and not because they had thought carefully about their words. If several instructors are going to use journals in their classes, it would be useful to coordinate this so that the best results may be obtained for all. Given the organization of teacher education in a large university this is a difficult task unless all of the courses are coordinated and more closely connected.

Implications for Further Study

Having worked so closely with Diane and Liz for the past fifteen months, I have a strong urge to follow them into their first year of teaching. I have shared so much of this journey with them that I would like to discover what happens for them when they leave the university behind. They are both so committed to journal writing for themselves, I am sure that their discoveries and feelings in their first years of teaching will be documented regularly as they progress. Thus my first recommendation for further study would be to follow student teachers through their university courses and then continue as they join the profession and begin to practice their craft. I would like to discover if it is true, as Tabachnik and Zeichner (1984) state, that the

significant impact of student teaching "is then strengthened during the early years of a teacher's career" (p. 29).

The other possibility for future study is in the area of the practicum triad of student teacher, cooperating teacher and faculty consultant. There is a growing body of research on the effectiveness and importance of the practicum triad in field service, and if attention is paid to the dynamics of the interrelationships within the triad, we will continue to "assure the quality of the experience as implemented in the field" (Zeichner, in Fields, 1988, p. 44). "For a long time researchers have treated education as a black box" (National Council for Research in Teacher Education, 1988, p. 31), and now we must open this black box and discover the power of the triad. Rowley (1988) uses the metaphor of growth:

> The field of education needs more than gentle gardeners. What it needs are adventurous leaders at all levels of the school community who understand that the challenges of creating better places to teach and learn are essentially the challenges of inviting a spirit of cooperation. (p.16)

By studying the dialogue journals of the student teachers, and the correlations that they found between theory and practice within their professional preparation, I hope I have been able to make connections between "the relationship of our training and what is really going on in the minds and emotions of our students" (Ryan, in MacKinnon, 1989, p. 2). I hope that I have been able to glimpse the dynamic nature of student teaching in all its aspects.

A Closing Comment

To be a friend, one must share: the good and the bad; the highs and the lows; the joys and the frustrations; the successes and the failures. If this is what being a friend means, then I have gained some friends over the past fifteen months. As I have shared a part of myself with my student teacher informants, so I have received, in return, strength and encouragement for my work. As they have shared much of themselves with me, I hope that I too have been able to encourage them in their journey of learning. If this is what being a friend means, then I hope that I have been a friend to them. It is impossible to share so much of someone's deepest thoughts and feelings over a period of time and not become connected in some way.

We have all shared part of a journey. I have enjoyed my travels with Diane, Liz, Laura, Sue, and Toni who all know, at this point, the direction towards their next destination. I am not quite as sure of my own destination. My path has come to a crossroads, but as I ponder which direction I will take in the next part of my journey of learning, I have something to guide me; I will continue to explore, I will continue to discover, and I will continue to write in my journal, and in so doing, my journey of learning will not end.

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APPENDIX 1

COURSE OUTLINE

PLAY AS A TEACHING STRATEGY

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Department of Elementary Education

PLAY AS A TEACHING STRATEGY

ED CI 402, Section A2

Fall, 1988

Dr. Janis Blakey
Office: Room 542
Phone: 432-5428

COURSE OUTLINE

Play is not a simple,"fun" activity which provides children with a means of passing time; rather, it is a creative, complex, and powerful endeavor which is essential to the survival of human beings and other animals. Because play is a vehicle through which children explore, discover, and learn about the world, it can be utilized as a meaningful teaching strategy. The setting does not limit a child's desire to play; therefore, play can become an integral part of program development at all levels of education. The role of the adult and the structuring of the environment (both indoors and outdoors) are essential to the successful implementation of a play based program.

This course is intended to help you realize the importance of play, how it can be used effectively at the elementary level, and how to share your view of play with parents and fellow teachers. Play will be examined in relation to both child development and curriculum planning.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To examine play from a theoretical perspective.
2. To examine the changing nature of play in relation to: a) development, b) the implications for adult involvement, and c) strategies for educational planning and programing.
3. To understand how both indoor and outdoor environments enhance the quality of play.
4. To develop and enhance your observational skills of children in various play situations.
5. To use information obtained in observational settings for the evaluation of children's progress and for program planning.
6. To discover ways of helping parents and fellow colleagues understand the role of play in an educational setting.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Esbensen, S. (1987). The early childhood playground: An outdoor environment. Michigan: High/Scope press.

Manning, K. & Sharp, A. (1978) Structuring play in the early years at school. London, England: Ward Lock Educational.

McKee, J.S. (1986). Play: Working partner for growth. Washington, DC: Association for Childhood Education International.

Rogers, C.S. & Sawyer, J.K. (1988) Play in the lives of children. Washington, DC: National Association for Young Children.

Handouts ($10.00 will be collected for handouts)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Johnson, J.E.; Christie, J.E.; & Yawkey, T.D. Play and early childhood development. (1987). Scott, Foresman.

APPENDIX 2

COURSE OUTLINE

INTEGRATING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

APPENDIX 3

STUDENT RELEASE FORM

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Department of Elementary Education

ED CI 403

Integrating Theory and Practice in Early Childhood Education

January, 1990

Instructor: Lorene Everett-Turner
Office: 534 Education South
Phone: 492-5428

COURSE OUTLINE

The framework of the Early Childhood Minor falls into seven areas of study (see next page). During the past three years, you have worked toward various objectives within this framework. The purpose of this course is to provide experiences, in each of these areas, which were not included in other courses or which you feel need to be covered in more depth. The overall framework of the Early Childhood program and the specific objectives for this course are outlined on the following pages.

During class time, you will have the opportunity to pursue the stated objectives in various ways. There will be areas set up in the two classrooms (rooms 201/203) which correspond with the seven areas of study. Some of the activities will be required and are to be completed by everyone. Other activities are ones which you select based on your individual needs and interests. In addition, there will be large group sessions which everyone is expected to attend and small group sessions which will be designed for specific needs. The lab times include workshops, visits to special programs, and opportunities to plan for and work with young children.

COURSE OUTLINE

The objectives for each of the areas of study in this course are:

The Child

To ensure that the child remains the central focus of all decisions, actions, and interactions.

To develop an awareness of cultural differences among children.

To develop an understanding of special needs children and their families.

Personnel

To develop an understanding of your various roles as a professional.

To develop an understanding of the roles of other personnel in the child's program.

Facilities

To develop a child centered learning environment for primary children.

Learning Experiences

To develop an understanding of the child's view of various curricular areas.

To examine meaningful ways in which the curriculum can be integrated.

To develop the necessary skills to implement a sound nutrition program.

Foundation Knowledges

To become aware of special programs for the young child.

To develop a personal philosophy of early childhood education.

Family/Home Environment

To develop suitable techniques for communicating with parents.

To acquire skills necessary for involving families in a program.

Professional Resources

To acquire information and techniques for the utilization of community resources in your program.

To acquire information about procedures necessary for utilizing school, city, and county/municipal resources services.

ASSIGNMENT PROFILE

A. Independent Assignments — 25
Your independent assignment should be an outgrowth of your individual needs and interests. There will be further in class discussion on possible topics.
Date due: January 31

B. Lab Activities — 50
This will include visits to centres, workshops, planning for and working with primary children, and an investigation of integrating special needs children into regular early childhood programs.

Special Needs Project 25
Primary Project 25

C. Participation in Ongoing Activities — 25
Your class attendance and participation is an important aspect of your work in the Early Childhood Program. Your logs should reflect the nature of your involvement (in and out of class), your reactions to the various activities, and can serve as a future resource. Therefore it is important that you become an active member of our group and reflect on the various activities related to this course.

Participation: You cannot fully participate in this course unless you attend class. However, there may be legitimate reasons for not attending such as serious illness, family crisis, et cetera. Please contact your instructor and record your absence in your log. Your participation includes your involvement in activities during both class time and lab time.

Journals: These are a reflection of what you do both in class and out of class (readings, visits, group work, et cetera). By clearly recording the names of films, books, and resources, you can develop a file of information for your future use. Your personal reactions to the various activities will help you think about the application of your work and will help me evaluate the appropriateness of the activities. The logs can also become an informal dialogue through which we can share ideas with each other and provide support and suggestions to our colleagues within class.

The mark will be developed at the end of the course based on the following "points system":

9 = 95-100
8 = 89-94
7 = 75-88
6 = 65-74
5 = 50-64

APPENDIX 3

STUDENT RELEASE FORM

Reflections on Practice Teaching and Learning Theory

I agree to work with Ann Mills as part of her study exploring the journey of learning taken during my field placement and my subsequent university classes. She will analyze my journal and tape-record and analyze conversations at certain intervals during the study. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from further participation at any time. If I opt out of the study, the photocopy of my journal will be returned and the computer entry and audio tapes will be destroyed.

I have been informed that my written journals and tape-recorded conversations with Mrs Mills are confidential and that my identity will not be divulged. On completion of the study, the photocopy of my journal and the original tape-recordings will be destroyed, but the computer entries may be used for professional/research purposes by the researcher.

Name _____
(Please Print)

Signed _____

Date _____